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— *A STUDY*

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THE VĪRAŚAIVA SAINTS

A STUDY

H. THIPPERUDRA SWAMY

Translated into English by
S. M. ANGADI

JAGADGURU SHRI SHIVARATREESHWARA GRANTHAMALE

RAO AND RAGHAVAN

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TO

HIS HOLINESS JAGADGURU
SHRI SHIVARATRI RAJENDRA MAHASWMIJI
OF
SHRI SUTTUR MATH

PREFACE

This book is a translation of my thesis, *Śaraṇara Anubhāva Sāhitya*, presented to the Karnatak University for the award of a Ph. D. degree. Under the able and experienced guidance of Professor S. S. Malwad of Karnatak University, I conducted my studies and completed my thesis. I owe an immense debt of gratitude to the learned Professor for his guidance as also for writing a Foreword to my work.

My research into the subject was conducted in the light of the Śaraṇas' vacanas; hence it is that vacanas are quoted profusely throughout the book. For these quotations I have, mostly, followed the editions of the late Mr. P. G. Halakatti. It is my first duty to remember the man who laid firm foundations for scholarly studies and research in respect of vacana literature and has been rightly called the Father of Vacana Literature. I have also taken help from quite a few other works on vacana literature and from different editions of vacanas and I am grateful to the authors and editors of all these works.

My thesis is now appearing in its English translation sooner than I had hoped through the efforts of my friend Mr. S. M. Angadi. Mr. Angadi, who collaborated with Prof. A. Menezes in translating the *Śūnyasaṁpādane* for the Karnatak University is motivated with a keen desire to make the vacana literature widely known. I am indebted to him for willingly undertaking to translate my work into English.

When the idea of an English translation of my work was first mooted, His Holiness Shri Shivaratreeshwara Swamiji gave all encouragement and extended his invaluable support. The Swamiji is rendering a great service to the cause of education by running several schools, colleges and free boarding houses for students in Mysore and elsewhere. He has also published a number of scholarly and research works in his Shri Shivaratreeshwara Granthamale Series of publications.

I am immensely grateful to the revered Swamiji for granting me permission to dedicate this work to him.

My thanks are also due to Mr. M. Sathyanarayana Rao of Rao and Raghavan for the keen interest taken by him in the various stages of production of this book and to Mr. G. H. Rama Rao of Mysore Printing and Publishing House, Mysore, for doing a neat job of printing it.

Manasa Gangotri
Mysore, March 31. 1968

H. Thipperudra Swamy

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Moved by the plain but exemplary lives of the Vīraśaiva saints, no less than by their ideas and utterances, I had long cherished a desire to write, if not a book, at least a brochure on them. This desire remained, for want of opportunity and adequate preparation, unfulfilled. So, when I received from Dr. H. Thipperudra Swamy a copy of his doctoral thesis, I felt moved to translate it into English as a pious exercise. I took up the translation work as a challenge and an opportunity. In this task, I must gratefully admit, I had the advice and encouragement of learned friends.

I do not know how far I have succeeded in bringing out the spirit of the original. But I have done my best to keep as close as possible to the original, in both spirit and letter. My main incentive in this task has been the thought that I am helping so valuable a work on the Vīraśaiva saints reach a wider public.

I am highly indebted to H.H. the Swamiji of Suttur Math for publishing this translation. My thanks are due to Mr. D. R. Sanakal for typing out the Ms with his habitual care and competence.

Dharwar
March 31, 1968

S. M. Angadi

FOREWORD

The Vīraśaiva saints have rightly realised in their literature that the journey towards the Ultimate (or pilgrimage to the Divine) is the highest goal of human life. In their writings we find a perennial flow of thoughts and feelings, a philosophic insight, a mystic intuition that command universal esteem. So far only restricted to a limited area and expressed in specific terminology, this precious fund of thought which is enshrined in the Kannada language is yet to be broadcast the world over. This book, '*Śaraṇara Anubhāva Sāhitya*,' *or* '*The Śaraṇas*' *Mystic Literature*', is an important attempt in that direction. The fanaticism of followers and the indifference of others come in the way of proper understanding and due appreciation. This book, however, looking at Śaraṇa literature with reverence and sympathy, yet objectively, is the outcome of comprehensive study. It is the work of a man who, understanding the significance of the Śaraṇas' knowledge, discipline and experience, attempts to bring out, with illustrations, the special features of Śaraṇa literature against the background of other similar literatures of the world.

His grandfather, steeped in Śaraṇa literature in palm-leaf manuscripts, his grandmother with the names of Basavanna and other Śaraṇas ever on her lips, the environment of his family that has always cherished the spiritual hymns of Nijaguna Shivayogi, his childhood in such a congenial setting, his studious nature and religious zeal during early adolescence, the happy student days that evoked in him the sense that life itself is a field of austerity, his higher education in the stimulating atmosphere of Mysore, encouraged in Dr. Thipperudra Swamy a comprehensive study of Kannada literature which, incidentally, secured for him the Ph.D. degree while a Kannada lecturer in the College.

Dr. Thipperudra Swamy, in addition to short brochures and critical appreciations, has already contributed eight books to the stock of Kannada literature—portraits of Śaraṇas culled

from Shadakshari's *Vṛṣabhendra Vijaya*; a collection of short stories reflecting real life; a collection of lyrics and poems; a collection of three one-act plays on three Śaraṇas; a historical play in five acts; a historical novel on Pulikeshi II; two novels on Prabhu and Mahadeviyakka. Thus his literary output has been varied. He has won the Mysore Government prize for the best Kannada work of the year. He has, in making use of the lives of Prabhu and Mahadevi, in their more delicate aspects, as a theme for a novel, shown a proper sense of balance, a due restraint and a right taste, and taken all the care that is needed for portraying the life and personality of Sister Mahadevi. The description of Śrīśailam and the plantain-grove are vivid and sufficiently realistic. The life and literature of the Śaraṇas and their spiritual endeavours have always evoked his regard and interest.

He has, as a student, lecturer and writer, already won a good name. Faith in the higher values of life, deep reverence for the eternal verities like truth, beauty and goodness, a gentle and unassuming nature, devotion to study, sweet and courteous manners and a ripe and refined culture: these I recognised in him years ago. He sought my help as a guide for his Ph.D. degree and I gladly agreed. The period when he was preparing his thesis after strenuous study with a single-pointed faith and an open and receptive mind for what is new, gave me unalloyed joy. He gladly accepted the methodology that might have appeared to others rather onerous and exacting. His thesis, presented to the Karnatak University, secured the Ph.D. degree for him. That it is now published in book form has given me delight and satisfaction.

In *Paripūrṇadeḍege* ("Unto the Ultimate"), he, being inspired by the wealth of suggestiveness in Prabhu's vacanas, has presented a portrait of his lofty spirit. Having shown his insight and resourcefulness there he has, here, taken up for philosophic discussion the Śaraṇas' mysticism and literature. Yet it has not become a dull and dry discussion. There is a close concurrence of joy and learning. Stating in the preface that the quest of happiness has been the constant goal of human endeavour, he

has shown considerable advance in his artistic skill in examining the trend of the Śaraṇa thought from various angles, in instituting a comparative study of their discipline and in weighing its special characteristics. Only when we know everything of a thing is it possible to judge its greatness. Hence the book comprises the sum and substance of other Indian religious and philosophic literatures and has also adequately made use of the thought currents of Western saints and philosophers.

Here we find an historic account of all the offshoots of Śaivism, from Vedic times to the flowering of Vīraśaivism, a comparative study of Kashmir Śaivism, Tamil Śaivism and Vīraśaivism; from which one may understand the way of his treatment. In expounding the significance of the Śakti principle against the background of dvaita (dualism), advaita (non-dualism), Śaktiviśiṣṭādvaita (qualified non-dualism) and māyāvāda (theory of illusion); in recording the relative values of the twenty-five categories of Saṁkhya, the thirty-six of Śaivism and the Vīraśaiva thirty-six principles in respect of the evolution of the cosmos and the nature of its Creator; in unravelling the inner significance of the Six-fold Hierarchy and in explaining the meaning of Śivayōga, we have evidence of his maturity. The Śaraṇa, through his inquiry into life's philosophy, attains fulfilment in ethical practice and divine experience. In the illustration of this, the author has selected Basavanna, Mahadeviyakka, Prabhu, Chennabasavanna, Siddharama and Madivala Machayya as representative Śaraṇas and presented through their vacanas their respective attainments. Adapting the different stages of spiritual development to the discipline and teachings of the Śaraṇas, it is shown here that the rule of synthesis and the consubstantial union of aṅga and liṅga are the special features of the Śaraṇa way.

The Śaraṇas' individual discipline and teaching, the social structure and the religious practice are here dealt with elaborately. There is a clear chart of the thought-current of the Śaraṇas, who so led their lives that their personal discipline led to the formation of a new and progressive social order and to the good of all beings. Being absorbed, after having shed their

sense of *I* and *Mine*, in the exercise of self-realisation and armed with the spirit of self-surrender, they embodied in their daily life the principles of truth, mercy, equality, fraternity and dignity of labour and thus showed a clear way to the world. It is a course wherethrough an individual, through spiritual evolution, must merge with the universal soul. That is why the Śaraṇa's life attained fulfilment spiritually as well as temporally. This is depicted here in various ways.

Dr. Thipperudra Swamy has convincingly explained the exact connotation of terms like Prasāda (grace), Śūnya (Absolute), Anubhāva (Divine experience) that one usually comes across in Śaraṇa literature. While discussing the meaning of the English term 'mysticism' he has appropriately made use of the thought currents of Western thinkers and saints. An exact concept of the term anubhāva is, through profuse illustrations from the vacanas, made evident. While comparing the mysticism of Indian saints with that of Christian seekers, various instances are cited of how the Śaraṇa mystic experience, advancing on the path of the six-fold hierarchy towards the consubstantial union of aṅga and liṅga, has utilised bhakti in various ways. Bhakti, after moving through faith, zeal and vigilance, evolves into mystic experience in the Prāṇaliṅgi-sthala. The subsequent steps are ānanda (delight) and samarasa (consubstantial union). In response to the bhakta's aspiration in the former three sthalas, it may be noticed, the divine grace descends in the latter three sthalas. The seeker's aspiration from below and the descent of divine grace from above meet and mingle in the heart—says Sri Aurobindo. The ordinary mind, according to Sri Aurobindo, must dissolve itself and rise to the height of the Supermind. Śaraṇa mysticism shows how the soul, with the cessation of its awareness of body, mind and wealth, unites consubstantially with the Divine Soul. There is a reference to the *ghana-mana*, or supermind, in vacana literature. The Śaraṇa who advances, through the unfolding of the worldly life itself, on the spiritual path, transcending all the dichotomies of life, finds God everywhere and in everything and attains consubstantial union with Him. In the vacanas is reflected the integral vision of the Śaraṇas' integral life.

The lofty experience of the awakened spirits of contemplatives is vividly recorded in the Śaranas' vacanas. As they give expression to their meaningful experience in a moving manner they have acquired to a remarkable degree literary grace and felicity. That is why in this book the form and content of vacana literature and its literary values are discussed in great detail. Besides, the relative merits of philosophy, literature and mysticism are also dealt with. The vacanas, as they record the human struggle and the subsequent steps leading to consubtantial union, are endowed with poetic elements. An attempt to express through symbols the experience that is beyond the reach of words has been ever going on. This symbolic expression developing further, has taken the form of enigmatic vacanas called 'beḍagina vacanagalu'; and they are a good many. To ordinary readers they sound absurd and paradoxical. Dr. Thipperudra Swamy has unravelled the meaning of these enigmas. He has collected a good number of such vacanas in his book and brought out their significance. The section devoted to them is indeed novel. In the selection of vacanas, in the order of their arrangement, in bringing out their exact meaning and commenting thereon, may be noted the author's special talent. The number and context of the vacanas quoted and the different ways of interpreting them are also worthy of notice.

In the mystic literature of the Śaraṇas is made manifest humanity's religion of all times. In their literary achievements may be discerned the core and essence of the old as well as the views of modern psychologists. The loftiest height that man should scale is pointed out in them. This book, with its comparative method, exact treatment of its theme, charming felicity of style in the Kannada language, has surpassed all former studies and appreciations of its kind and made a new contribution to our knowledge of the subject. It should serve as an excellent guide for those who wish to follow the path of mysticism.

This book, combining as it does greatness of theme, exactness of treatment, and beauty of language, will, I believe, be welcome to the reader.

Dharwar
October 19 1963

S. S. Malwad

INTRODUCTION

Though man is also an animal in so far as the basic urges of his body, like food, sex and sleep are concerned, yet, in the way he has subdued and controlled them for his life's purpose, he transcends the range of the animal kingdom. Not resting content with the transient pleasures of life, he embarks upon the quest for abiding happiness.

What is the highest goal of this perpetual human endeavour? If we are to answer this question in one phrase, we may say it is "quest for bliss." If we survey human history, from the cave-man who chased and killed wild animals with paleolithic weapons and ate raw flesh, to the modern man who is ever striving hard to establish his mastery over Nature with the help of scientific inventions, we notice how this quest for happiness has all along been, in different forms, the driving force in man's progress. As man's experience was gradually enlarged and his life's means, setting and environment changed, the scope of his happiness too widened. Happiness may be defined as deliverance from bondage. We see how human life is bound to this world by an infinite number of unseen bonds. Fetters like hunger and thirst, love and lust and many others, in their hundreds and thousands, tormenting us in different forms, have bound us. To seek deliverance from their clutches is our constant endeavour. Man's longing for this deliverance is the basic cause for the origin of religion. As Swami Vivekananda puts it, "The effort to attain freedom underlies all forms of worship, whether we know it or not";[1] the basic longing behind all kinds of worship is one and the same, namely, the yearning for freedom. Knowingly or unknowingly, everybody's life is steadily moving towards that freedom and the resultant happiness.

We find in the history of man how this desire for deliverance has expressed and evolved itself in several contexts and in several directions. Some scholars are of the opinion that the

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1. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. I

primitive man's desire for freedom originated in fear.[1] Whenever Nature presented its dreadful aspects, in its rage and fury clouds jostled and thundered, wild and ferocious brutes pounced upon man and ruthlessly made him their prey, or when he saw people falling victims to manifold infectious diseases like insects dropping into fire, the frightened man helplessly shrugged his shoulders and lifted his head towards the unknown forces that might be a possible cause of all these outrages. This may be said to be the root cause of the birth of religion.

Besides fear, curiosity roused in the mind of man is another cause of the birth of religion. The sun and the moon which rise and set, shine and illumine, being subject to an inexorable law of nature, the countless stars that throng and glisten in the sky, the rivers that roll and gurgle, the blowing wind, the blossoming flower, the babe that is born, the danger of death—each evokes a varying kind of ripple of curiosity in the thinking mind of man. In the presence of each of them he faces the questions, Why is this? How is this? When his curiosity takes the shape of worship of beauty, it enters the realm of emotions to find the truth that governs all these external phenomena. This is the path of literature. When it turns out to be a logical investigation that seeks the relation between cause and effect and busies itself with finding out the nature of objective truth, it becomes philosophy. In short, when the quest for truth aims at objective comprehension, it becomes philosophy; when it aims at subjective apprehension it becomes literature. Though it includes both subject and object, yet, when it directs its steps towards the search of some supernatural power that transcends all these, it enters the sphere of religion in its broad and comprehensive sense.

Ever since culture began to appear in the history of humanity, religion has been the constant companion of man. History has not seen so far a human society without religion. Mr. Charles Conant Josey endorses this view: "History cannot point to a culture in which there is no religion."[2] But it is true that, as man has advanced in his cultural

1. Josey, Charles Conant, *Psychology of Religion*
2. ibid.

pursuits, the nature and concept of religion has changed. Growing richer and richer by his fresher and newer experience, it has moulded his life from one form to another and marched on the progressive path of flux and change. The nature of religion that is revealed in the Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro cultures is not the same as that of the Vedic times. Even in the religion of the Vedas we find different stages of development. If polytheistic worship of gods is found at one point, the idea of one God dominating all other gods prevails at another. The Vedas also contain the idea that the power that has created this multifarious world is one and that it is not different from the wider universe. We find growth in the method of worship as well as in the conception of God.[1] If the Vedas expound karma with emphasis on rituals and sacrifices, the Vedanta or Upanishads lay stress upon jñāna.

If we look at the evolutionary progress of religion, we are fully convinced that all these are the various experiments performed by man to get the highest benefit from religion. But man is never content with the imperfect and the smaller. The Upanishads declared : "Nāilpe sukhamasti", or with greater and greater delight he must rise step by step to the highest perfection that is the supreme longing of his innermost heart. This divine discontent alone leads him to the perfect religion. Hence "We may define religion as the inward Power which urges all living beings to strive to reach higher and higher stages, the highest being perfection."[2]

Therefore, the utmost height that man, nay, all other animals as well, must reach some day or other, is Perfection. The unswerving ideal that ever stands before a jīva, that marches ahead finding equanimity in the ups and downs of life and unity in the diversities of the world, is the accomplishment of perfect bliss. As it was the supreme ideal of the ancient man, so is it of the modern man too. From that day to this, enormous changes in the external life of man have taken place. His life's problems have grown in size and number and become more

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1. Hanumantha Rao, G., *Ṛgveda Suktagalu*
2. Sivapada Sundaram, *Śaiva School of Hinduism*

complex and intricate. But nonetheless the ultimate goal of his life has ever remained the same.

Only because man's highest ideal, whether he knows it or not, has thus remained unimpaired by time, the steps that led towards that ideal, as well as the mystic utterances voiced by the spirits animated by the vision of that ideal, are everlasting and ever fresh. The society of the Upanishadic age may not be seen now ; the context of the times when the *Bhagavadgita* was composed may be quite unknown to us. Nevertheless, the Upanishads or the *Gita* can be guides to the scientific age of our day. Because they enshrine the eternal truth, they deal with the ultimate goal of all human endeavour.

"What shall I do with that, gaining which I cannot be immortal ? Therefore, O Lord, tell me the way to the immortality you have realised"[1]—thus Maitreyi asked her husband Yajnavalkya. That question is a question everyone must ask one day or another. Only when it is faced and answered may the life's purpose of man be said to have been accomplished—declared the Upanishadic seers. They admonish us to attain this knowledge in this very life, for, otherwise, we shall be put to limitless loss, by saying "uttiṣthata, jāgrata, prāpyavarānnibōdhata", i.e. "Arise, awake, stop not till the goal is reached"—thus they goad us. They open our eyes to the true ideal.

In the midst of this ever-changing world there dwells an abiding truth; behind the external world of diverse forms and names there exists one formless Power. The sages who had realised this truth named that Power, the Highest Thing, The Supreme Truth, Parabrahma, etc. This omnipotent Supreme Truth, which pervades the universe as smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest, also dwells in the innermost core of the heart of every being, as ātman. To attain it is the sole aim of life. To this consummation of self-realisation their pursuit brought them. Yama says to Nachiketa, "Those who seek the Lord, who indwells in all things and beings in their own souls, get imperishable happiness, whereas others cannot."[2] Similarly, Yajnavalkya says to Maitreyi, "One

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1. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*
2. *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, 2. 2. 12

should see Him, hear Him, meditate upon Him, concentrate upon Him; O Maitreyi, all this shall be realised by seeing, hearing, meditating upon Him and by definite knowledge."[1]

Thus, on the spiritual foundations laid by the Upanishadic sages stands fully developed the edifice of a brilliant cultural Indian tradition. We can see how the splendid perfection of the Upanishads shines in one form or another, everywhere in our Purāṇas, sacred legends and great epics, in music and literature. The *Bhagavadgita* is, of course, the distilled essence of the Upanishads.

In the course of time, even the splendid vision of the Upanishads was dimmed, being caught in blind belief, in sectarian customs and dogmatic rigidities. We see a time when, ignoring the pulp, the peel was valued as all in all. Attempts to protest against this and to revitalise religion became inevitable. The birth of Jainism and of Buddhism was outstanding among such attempts. Up to a certain time, they fulfilled their purpose in an effective manner. But, gradually, they too became mere beaten tracks of tradition and lost their native vigour. In such a context, Sankara appeared on the scene, protested against these systems and rejuvenated the Vedic religion by dint of individual talent and ability.

Thereafter, several Acharyas, seekers, seers and saints kept the Upanishadic vision alive through their holy living and pursuits, thoughts and practices, and their mystic utterances. So far as Karnataka is concerned, the Vacana literature of the 12th century and the Dāsa literature of the 15th century are two important stages in the history of mysticism.

By the middle of the 12th century, the infection of blind belief which had clung to society like a parasitical plant in Karnataka as well as in the rest of India, had spread far and wide. Religion had become rigid and dogmatic, like a steel castle, and society divided into water-tight compartments. As a result of this, the common people were looking for, and anxiously awaiting the arrival of a divine soul able to break such barriers and distribute the fruits of pure religion among all

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1. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 2.4.5

people. In the hour of such a crucial need in Karnataka, Basavanna appeared as light in the midst of darkness. The ancient Veeraśaiva religion, rejuvenated and revitalised by him, became a means of the people's upliftment, an instrument to pluck out the corruption that had set in. In consequence, there arose a spirit of universal good and it heralded the advent of a new light.

Basavanna did not rely upon the Sanskrit language for religious awakening. With the pious desire that religion should reach every man and woman, he carried its message to every hearth and home through the people's own language. Like the Buddha who had proclaimed his message in the language of the people of his day, Basavanna made use of Kannada.

Under his leadership, all the Śaraṇas rallied together. The knowledge that has emerged from their discussions, and the Vacana literature that has reflected it, form an unforgettable page in the history of Karnataka. This thesis proposes to bring out the spiritual path of the Śaraṇas, the broad outlines of the Śivatattva that forms its basis and background, the nature of their mystic experience, and the impact of their revolutionary thought on contemporary society as well as on the Kannada literature.

CHAPTER I

THE EVOLUTION OF ŚAIVA SIDDHĀNTA

From the history of the Vedic religion in India we find that it evolved into several branches, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Śākta and Gāṇapatya. In the Vedic period itself none of these branches are noticed. None of the gods had a predominant position. The prodigious forces of Nature were looked upon by the Aryans of Vedic age as gods. We find the dominant phenomena of nature that wield their influence on every-day life, being worshipped as gods. The sun, the moon, the sky, the dawn, the wind, the fire, Varuna and Indra — all these were gods. In every phenomenon where the hand of the living power of Nature was noticed, the presence of one deity or another was conceived.

In the Vedas, we notice, each god seems to have occupied a principal position at one time. Initially, the worship of the earth and the sky is prominent. Thereafter, Varuna pushes them back and comes to the front, shining as a real power that governs or regulates the whole order of the world. The Veda has raised him to such an honoured position that he was esteemed as the almighty lord of the world, competent to wipe out all sin. But, later on, Indra occupies a higher position than his, and gets the highest place among the gods of the Vedas. A fourth of the total number of hymns in the *Ṛgveda* is dedicated to him.

Barring Indra, Agni and Soma are next in importance among the gods. Agni, who served as carrier of oblations from devotees to the gods, claimed the highest reverence. The sun, too, was worshipped as friend, enlivener, nourisher and in several other roles.[1]

Thus, there is polytheism in the *Ṛgveda*. Many a time a single deity is described as if he were the supreme god. But in

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1. Luniya, *Evolution of Indian Culture*

the course of time the Vedic seers seem to have realised that all these various gods were one in nature though different in name. The sentence, "Ekaṁ sat viprā bahudhā vadanti,"—"God is one, though the wise call him by several names,"—appears in the *Ṛgveda* itself. It may be said that this idea gradually developed into the concept of monotheism. There is a power which has created this entire cosmos; that supreme principle is the power which is fundamental to all other forces of nature. It creates and governs the universe. This monistic concept gradually gathered strength.

By the time the Vedic age came to a close, the supremacy of the cosmic deities like Indra and Varuna had already begun to wane ; Rudra and Vishnu were getting prominent instead. Despite the reference to them in the *Ṛgveda* they were not so important as Varuṇa and Indra. As their sway slowly grew in course of time, they came to be embodiments of the highest principle which is the basic cause of all these deities as well as of the universe. In the *Ṛgveda* itself, the word Śiva occurs but is only used as an attribute of Rudra. He later grew famous by the same name. Other titles like Mahādeva and Paśupati were appended to him afterwards. Those who esteemed Him as the Supreme Spirit and the God to be worshipped came to be known as Śaivas, and those who held Vishnu high, as Vaiṣṇavas.

Thus, from the standpoint of the growth of the Vedic religion, it may be said that the worship of Śiva had begun before the Vedic period came to a close. But there is historical evidence to show that Śiva had been worshipped from times long before the Vedic age. We get corroborating proofs in the remains of the Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro in support of this belief. In the Indus valley culture, the worship of female gods was dominant, but one male god, now reckoned to have been Śiva, was also worshipped. On a seal found in Mohenjo-Daro a divine figure seated in *yogamudra* surrounded by wild animals is found. Experts have guessd it to be that of Śiva Himself. Its head dress in the shape of a trident has confirmed this belief. Here Śiva is depicted as the great yōgi and Paśupati. The Lingas that are found in Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro are

eloquent evidence to prove that the worship of Śiva, not only in the form of idols but also of Śivalinga, was already in vogue even at that period.[1]

It is now almost definite that the period of the Indus valley culture was 3,000 B.C., which means that it had its heyday five thousand years ago. The period of the *Ṛgveda* is, at the earliest, 2,000 B.C. It is now accepted that it does not go beyond that.[2] Hence, the Indus valley culture is older than the Vedic culture —there is no doubt about it now. If it is noticed that the worship of Śiva was predominent even in the Indus valley culture, the antiquity of the Śaiva religion can very well be understood. Śiva was worshipped by the aborigines who lived here before the advent of the Aryans. The Vedic culture of the Aryans later on accepted Śiva and gave Him a sovereign place in the hierarchy of their gods.

But no god Śiva by name is to be found in the Ṛgveda. The god Rudra had Śiva as an attribute. Rudra is there conceived primarily as a god of fury. Certain scholars observe that Śiva is a Dravidian god, and Rudra an Aryan god, but that they are considered identical. There is another view also, that Śiva and Rudra are not two separate gods; that Śiva, the Dravidian god, is also named Rudra as having the same meaning; and that the Vedas too have accepted Him.[3] We notice here how the concept of Rudra gradually evolved right from the Vedas. The Aryans looked upon Rudra first as a dreadful god. When their cows died by the stroke of lightning and their children fell victims to epidemics and diseases, they believed that Rudra was responsible for all such disasters. They were overcome by fear that they could not survive without his grace and mercy. Assuming him to be the Paśupati who protects their livestock and the great doctor who saves their children's lives, they bent their heads in homage to him.[4] A hymn is traced in the *Ṛgveda* which goes :

"O Rudra, destroy not with the fire of thy fury our children

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1. ibid.
2. ibid.
3. Joshi, S.B., *Śivarahasya*
4. Bhandarkar, R. G., *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*

and our people, our cows and homes. We ever pray to you and offer you oblations." Thus we find that, at the time of the *Ṛgveda* Rudra had occupied an eminent position.

But he had not got this position out of the love of devotees. They had surrendered to him under the stress of fear. This dreadfulness of Rudra was gradually toned down, and the concept that he is mercy incarnate, ever benevolent and compassionate to the people, developed. He became popular by such names as Lord of the Mountain (Girīśa) and He of the Matted Hair (Jaṭājūṭa). By the time we come to the *Yajurveda* and the *Atharvaveda*, Rudra, casting away fury, had come out as Śiva, Śaṅkara and Śaṁbhu. The *Śvētāśvatara Upaniṣad* perfecting the concept of Śiva esteemed Him as the Supreme Spirit, of the nature of truth, consciousness and bliss. Long before deities like Vishnu came to challenge him, Śiva shone as the sole monarch of the realm of devotion.[1]

Thus Śaivism has the hoariest historic tradition. Though the origin of Śiva worship is so ancient, the clear shape of its perennial flow and of its different branches is not yet traced. An attempt is made here to study briefly the various branches of Śaivism in their broadest outlines and thus to trace the line of its evolution.

Who expounded the Śaiva Siddhānta in a systematic form for the first time and when, has not been definitively decided so far. By the time of the *Mahabharata*, the worship of Śiva had already acquired eminent priority, and one of its important offshoots had become famous by the name of Pāśupata.[2] Madhava has specially mentioned it by that name in his *Sarvadarśana Saṅgraha* and given its details. He has quoted a certain portion from a certain book which might have in all probability been written by Nakulīśa, or Lakulīśa, who had expounded the Pāśupata. Evidence to that effect can be had from the stone inscription found in the temple of Ekalingaji near Udayapur and also from the inscription called Sintraprasasti. It is learnt that he

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1. "In the age in which the *Svētāsvatara Upaniṣad* was composed Rudra (Śiva) was alone in the field as the Supreme God."—ibid.
2. ibid.

was believed to have been the very incarnation of Śiva and that he had four disciples—namely, Kuśika, Gārgya, Kauruṣa and Maitreya, who expounded in turn the tenets of Śaivism. Thus it branches off into four principal offshoots—Paśupata, Kāpālika, Kāḷāmukha and Śaiva. The period of their origin may be stated to be the 2nd century B.C.[1]

Pāśupata Śaiva

The term Pāśupata, or Māheśvara, seems to have been used in a comprehensive sense inclusive of all other Śaiva branches like Kāpālika, Kāḷāmukha, etc.[2] Sankaracharya has called all followers of Pāśupata, Maheśvaras. The Acharyas that followed him have named the offshoots of Śaivism each in his own way. Vachaspati has referred to them as Śaiva, Pāśupata, Kārunika Siddhānta and Kāpālika ; Ramanuja as Kāpālika, Kāḷāmukha, Pāśupata and Śaiva; whereas Madhva has used the term Pāśupata to apply to all the Śaiva branches. The Suprabhēdāgama refers to Śaiva, Pāśupata, Sōma and Lākula. It has named Sōma instead of Kāpālika. They are called Mahāvratadhāris, or observers of great vows. Similarly, the name Kālāmukha is also differently used as 'Kāladamana', 'Kārunika' and 'Lākula' by different writers.[3] But the name Pāśupata is common to all books.

As stated already, this tradition must have been started by one who was named Lakulīśa or Nakulīsa. It is referred to in the *Sarvadarśana Saṅgraha* of Madhavacharya. Kaundinya has written a commentary on the Pāśupata aphorisms of Lakulīśa. Sankaracharya has referred to the Pāśupata Śaiva in his commentary. It has been possible to understand the nature of the Pāśupata from all these references.

We notice in the Pāśupata tradition different sections, namely, kārya (effect), kāraṇa (cause), yōga, vidhi (process) and duḥkhānta (sorrow's end).

Kārya or pariṇāma (effect) means this sṛṣṭi, or creation. The Pāśupata does not probe deep into the cosmogeny of this world. It observes that Śiva is instrumental in the creation of this

1. ibid.
2. Farquhar, J. N., *An Outline of Religious Literature of India*
3. Kapataral Krishnaraya, *History of Lākula Saivas in Karnataka*

world. This world is the work of that omnipotent Īśvara. His grace is essential for jīva, or paśu, to liberate himself from the world's bondage and free himself from all pains.

Yōga and vidhi point out the course of training laid down by the Pāśupata. Pāśupata enunciates that the constant contact of 'paśu' with 'pati' constitutes yōga.[1] The seeker, without being caught up into the outside world, is expected to meditate upon Śiva in solitude. He should obliterate all karmas and sins by the mortification of his body and meditate upon Īśvara or God continuously for at least six months. As he advances on this yōgic path, he will possess several occult powers, supernatural and marvellous, by Śiva's grace.

He should only meditate upon the undivided nature of Śiva. Śiva is not caught in the tangled web of objects described in words. He transcends all these objects. Paśupata expects that, since he is Vāgviśuddha, His formless nature should alone be meditated upon.[2]

There are certain rules to be followed by a Pāśupata yōgi. It is proper for him to stay in a cemetery in order to attain immediate renunciation without being subject to the baits and lures of the world; to have an ash bath thrice a day, i.e. morning, noon and evening, to imitate the form of Īśvara; to dance, being intoxicated with the love of Īśvara—these are the rules. If these rules are followed, life's sorrow comes to an end. This itself is duḥkhānta.

By the time this path was being followed by several seekers it lost its original nature and purpose, and just degenerated into mere *avitatkaraṇa* and *avitadbhāṣaṇa*, or doing what should not be done and speaking what should not be spoken. To dance repeating the word *huḍuhuḍu*, to lie down stretching and shaking hands and legs in a strange way—these were also included in the rules prescribed for the practice of Pāśupata. This cult which prescribes such abnormal practices went to still further extremes in its abnormality. This can be noticed in the Kāpālika tradition.

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1. Dasgupta, S. N., *A History of Indian Philosophy*
2. ibid.

The Kāpālika way enunciates that a jīva should follow the following rules to realise his end :

1. Ever to carry a human skull and eat food in it.
2. To dwell in a cemetery and always to smear the whole body with ash.
3. To eat ash.
4. To hold the lākula, or yogic staff, in the hand.
5. To have a bowl of liquor always and forget the world in intoxication.
6. To project Śiva in that bowl and worship it.

We can very well see in all these rites how the path of devotion was distorted in the name of devotion itself. All attempts to imitate the dreadful aspect of Śiva without knowing the significance underlying it, it may be said, was the cause of such fantastic aberrations.

Vāyavīya Saṁhita

By the time of the Śivāgamas and Śiva Purāṇas, Śaivism was already set on the path of evolution, having embodied humanitarian elements. Śaivism is expounded on a wide scale in the Śiva Mahāpurāṇa. Though the period of this Purāṇa cannot be definitely fixed, it may be admitted that it belonged to a period at least earlier than Sankara's.[1] Its concluding portion, the Vāyavīya Saṁhita, has expounded Śaivism in its own way. There are two parts of it. Though minor differences are discerned between the first half and the second, it may be said that, on the whole, both expound a certain form of Pāśupata Śaivism. Its broad outlines are in brief as under :

Śiva Himself is the cause of the world's evolution as well as involution. He is the omnipotent 'Puruṣa' or 'Brahman' or 'Paramātman'. Pradhana or Prakṛti is His body. He, who disturbs the Prakṛti and himself shines in many forms, yet remaining detached and dispassionate, is Śiva. Vāyavīya Saṁhita has clearly revealed the truth of this statement in the following stanza :

"namaḥ pradhāna dēhāya pradhāna kṣōbha kāriṇē |
trayōvimśati bhēdana vikṛtāya vikāriṇē ‖ "

1. Dasgupta, S. N., *A History of Indian Philosophy*

(Hail! to Him whose body is matter and who yet sets up vibrations in matter; to Him who, changes it in three-and-twenty ways and yet remains Himself unchanged.) He paints the world as a painter draws a picture. And he takes it into Himself at the time of *praḷaya*.

All the objects of this world can be classified under two heads, as gross and not gross. The ordainer of all these is Śiva. These three—gross, not gross and ordainer—have been termed pāśa, paśu and pati, respectively. Māyā has also been called prakṛti. The jīva shrouded by māyā is himself puruṣa. The bond that perpetually binds māyā and puruṣa is the effect of karma. The aspect of māyā that screens knowledge is said to be 'mala,' or impurity. When the veil is rent and jīva is freed from mala, or impurity, he shines in his own light. This itself is mukti, or deliverance. Bhakti, that brings about such a mukti, is also the result of Śiva's grace, and Śiva's grace can be had through bhakti. Thus, bhakti and Śiva's grace are mutually dependent, like seed and tree.

Though Śiva is niṣkaḷa, or undivided, by nature, to conceive of His impersonal aspect is not so easy. As fire manifests itself through wood only, Śiva should be meditated upon through His personal form. This is the nature of Śivatatva enunciated in the Vāvayīya Saṁhita.

Though its latter half continues the same trend, in a way it has indicated minor differences in the principle theme. The link that personally exists between the jīvas and māyā is a natural taint. In order to remove it, Śiva makes them pass through the sāṁsāric cycle of births and deaths and thus frees them. If this view is found in the first half, we notice it is slightly changed in the latter half. Here it is said that Śiva himself binds them with such noose as māyā ("mala māyādhibiḥ pāśaiḥ, sabadhnāti paśūnpatiḥ"). If the bound souls worship Śiva with love he will free them in the end. It is suggested that all creation is the ecstatic sport of Śiva.

Śivāgamas

Among the Āgamas there are three types, namely, Śākta, Pañcarātra and Śivāgama. The Śāktāgamas expound the Śākta religion, the Pañcarātra Āgamas the Vaiṣṇava religion, and the

Śivāgamas the Śaiva religion. It is believed by scholars that the Śāktāgamas are twenty-seven, the Pañcarātra Āgamas twenty-eight and the Śivāgamas hundred-and-eight. Among the hundred and-eight Śivāgamas, twenty-eight are held to be very important. Their dates cannot be definitely stated. Besides, it cannot be assumed that all these Āgamas were composed at one and the same period. However, several of the principal Āgamas may be said to have been formulated somewhere about the 9th century.

The term Āgama itself indicates their antiquity. Āgama means a set of books traditionally handed down. But in Śaivism the term Āgama carries a special meaning. 'Ā' stands for pāśa, or noose, 'ga' for paśu, or jīva, and 'ma' for pati or Lord. Thus the Āgamas are described as the books which reveal the knowledge of these principles. It is a symbolic description indicative of their importance. Among the twenty-eight principal Āgamas, ten are believed to have been composed by Śiva Himself. The remaining eighteen, we are told, were composed by seers who were inspired by the experience of the Divine. By the grace of Śiva they heard them told by Śiva and recorded them for the good of the world.

The following are the ten Āgamas composd by Śiva :

1. Kāmika	2. Yōgaja	3. Cintya
4. Kāraṇa	5. Ajita	6. Dīpta
7. Sūkṣma	8. Sāhasrak	9. Añśumān
10. Suprabha.		

The following are the Āgamas actually related by Śiva :

11. Vijaya	12. Niśvāsa	13. Svāyaṁbhuva
14. Ajnēyaka	15. Bhadrā	16. Raurava
17. Mākuṭa	18. Vimala	19. Candrahāsa
20. Mukhayugbiṁba	21. Udgīta	22. Lalita
23. Siddha	24. Saṁtāna	25. Narasimha
26. Kiraṇa	27. Paramēśvara	28. Para.

These are supposed to have been told by Śaiva saints for the benefit of devotees.

Every Āgama has usually four sections :

1. Vidyā or Jñānakāṇḍa
2. Yogakāṇḍa

3. Kriyākāṇḍa
4. Caryākāṇḍa

Both the Kriyā and Caryā sections mostly deal with the construction of temples, the procedure of idol installation, different ways of worship, and such other religious customs. In these respects, we find, the Śivāgamas more or less follow almost the same custom-ridden path. In the chapters on jnāna and yōga, the concept of the Godhead, the creation of the cosmos, the relation between jīva and Śiva, the yōgic path and such other philosophic inquiries of Śaivism are dealt with. From the principal points that occur in the Jnānakāṇḍa of the Kāmikāgama which is the first Āgama, we may learn the general nature of Śivatatva expounded by the Āgamas.

Śiva is timeless, infinite, omniscient and omnipotent. He alone is the instrumental cause of the world. He creates the world through the power inherent in Himself. The Power latent in Him is the principle of mediation between the conscious Śiva and the non-conscious cosmos. The same Power is the cause of bondage as well as of deliverance of all souls. This Power is also called 'Mahēśvariśakti'. In several ways it is responsible for the liberation of the soul which is subject to bondage. Many a time, when a man seems to suffer from distress, it is the remedy devised by Mahēśvari for his redemption. Śiva causes, through His Power, the same karmas to be done for the redemption of all souls. Ultimately he absolves them of their triple impurity.

The threefold noose of impurities called āṇava, māyā and kārmika has bound the soul fast. This noose pollutes the bliss of ātman, subjects him to bondage and thus turns him into a paśu. Śiva is the Paśupati who cuts this noose by the power of His grace and redeems the paśu. Only when the soul frees itself from this bondage shall its oneness with Śiva be effcted. This oneness is mokṣa, or liberation. This, in broad outline, is the doctrine expounded in the Śivāgamas.

The Śivāgamas constitute an outstanding stage in the history of Śaivism. Based on the Śivāgamas, several offshoots of Śaivism branched off. Though the fundamental principle enunciated in the Śivāgamas formed the basis for Kāshmir

Śaivism, Tamil Śaivism and Veeraśaivism, yet, all of them, it is noticed, have built different edifices of religion in accordance with their needs and experiences.

Kashmir Śaivism

Accepting the Śivāgamas as the highest authority, Śaivism assumed a particular shape in Kashmir. This system has two branches, namely, Spandaśāstra and Pratyabhijñaśāstra. We are told that Vasugupta and his disciple Kallaṭa are the promoters of the former, and Somananda of the latter.

The Śivasūtra and the Spandakārikā written by Vasugupta in or about 850 A.D. are the most important books on Spandaśāstra. The principal elements expounded in these two books are that Śiva manifests himself as individual souls, infinite in number, through his own amazing power; that He is the first cause of the creation of the cosmos through another power of His; hence every soul is in fact the embodiment of Paramātman; but that it forgets its native glory and nature under the veil of triple impurity.

By the power of a single pointed faith and constant meditation upon Śiva, the soul tears off the veil of triple impurity. If this divine spirit in the form of meditation becomes steady, it transmutes itself into a universal soul and acquires a cosmic eye which is called 'Bhairava'. This eye is of the nature of Śiva in the form of Bhairava, or Bhairava is the cause of this eye. This itself is the liberated state that the soul attains.

The Śivadṛṣṭi is the work of Somananda, the promoter of Pratyabhijñaśāstra. This is likely to have been composed about 900 A.D.[1] His disciple Udayakara and disciple's disciple, Abhinavagupta, have contributed to the growth of this science.

Though it mostly resembles the Spandaśāstra in its main philosophical outlines, it maintains its own speciality in the concept of liberation. Generally, ordinary souls do not experience the bliss of the divine, the reason for which is that

1. Farquhar, J.N., *An Outline of Religious Literature of India*, Bhandarkar, R. G., *Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism, etc.*

they are unaware of the divinity within themselves. If the soul realises the nature of divinity within itself and experiences its identity with Śiva permanently, that is mukti. This means that by constant faith in the identity of self and Śiva, Śivatattva, or Divinity, shall be attained, which is nothing less than mukti. That is why it is technically known as 'Pratybhijña'. As it embodies the three principles called Śiva, Śakti and Aṇu (atom), or pati, pāśa and paśu, it is also called 'trika'.

Tamil Śaivism

Among the branches of Śaivism of South India, the Śaiva Siddhānta of Tamilnad and the Veeraśaivism of Karnataka are of foremost importance. Though the period of origin and growth of Tamil Śaivism cannot be specifically known, yet it may be roughly said that it lies between the 8th and 13th centuries.

In the early years of Hinduism in South India, people worshipped both Śiva and Vishnu as their principal gods.[1] According to the devotee's inclination, each god enjoyed a prominent position at a time. In course of time, these gods had to face opposition from different faiths. If the opposition of atheism was formidable on one side, the non-conformist Jainism and Buddhism were equally hostile on the other, while superstitions and blind beliefs were corroding from within. Both Śaivism and Vaishnavism had to fight against all these and cause an effective change. This feat was accomplished by the Śaivite Nainars and Vaishanvite Alvars in the Tamil region.[2] Especially the Nainars brought about a marvellous change in the society of their day through their devotional songs. The royal patronage that Śaivism then got, gave it an added impetus for the growth of its prestige and influence.

Several books on Śavism were brought out in Tamil. The Nainars, leaving Śiva's terrific form out of consideration, sang devotional hymns that celebrate the real nature of Śiva, loving,

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1. "Hinduism itself came to the Tamil Country around 500 B.C. Between then and the time of opposition men worshipped both Vishnu and Śiva." J. H. Piet, *A Logical Representation of Śaiva Siddhānta Philosophy*
2. ibid.

tranquil and compassionate. The collection of such devotional songs by devotees of Śiva became famous by the name of Tēvāraṁ.[1]

Besides, these aphorisms which were to expound, in the form of a regular system the Śaiva philosophy expressed in the devotional songs, were also composed. Fourteen books in Tamil, including Maykandadeva's 'Sivajñānabōdha', Aruḷnandi's 'Sivajñānasiddhi' and Umapati's 'Śivaprakāśa,' completed the shape of the Śaiva Siddhānta.

The Śaiva Siddhānta has a clear and distinct idea of the principles it propounds. The Creator, the creation and the creature, or God, the world and the soul—these three are timeless or eternal. It does not say, like Advaita Siddhānta, that this world is an illusion. This world may not be a truth as known by our external sense organs. But it does not accept the view that this world is a mere hallucination, like the horns of a rabbit. Śiva has created this world through His power. For the making of an earthen pot, the potter is the first or efficient cause ; his wheel, staff, etc. constitute the instrumental cause ; and clay or earth is the material cause. Even so, Śiva is the First cause of this world, His conscious power, the instrumental cause and māyā, the material cause, states the Śaiva Siddhānta.[2]

The Sāṁkhya system, with prakṛti as its fundamental or primordial principle, develops the sequence of creation further. Prakṛti, mahat, or intellect, ego, the five sensory organs, the five motor organs, the five tanmātras, the five elements and the mind constitute twenty-four categories. Including jīvātma their number raises to twenty-five.

But the Śaiva Siddhānta accepts thirty-six categories. Instead of beginning with prakṛti, like the Sāṁkhya sequence, it starts with māyā, the material cause of creation. Māyā is

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1. ibid. Tēvāraṁs : a collection of devotional songs in honour of Śiva, sung by Appar, Sambandhar and Sundarar ..... Appar lived in the early part of the 7th century, while Sambandhar was his younger contemporary. Sundarar lived during the 8th century or the early portion of the 9th.
2. Paranjoti, V., *Śaiva Siddhānta*

subdivided into pure māyā and impure māyā. Śiva himself casts his influence directly upon pure māyā and is thus the cause of Śiva principles called Nāda, Bindu, Sādākhya, Māheśvari and Pure Vidyā. There being no direct contact between Śiva and impure māyā, the categories evolved out of pure māyā carry forward the process of creation. From pure māyā emanate the seven categories called impure māyā, kāla, niyati, kalā, vidyā, rāga and puruṣa. Thus prakṛti follows these seven. Thence the sequence of creation proceeds in the sāṁkhya order. It is shown in page 37.

Thus Śaiva Siddhānta, has found out its own path, discussing how the one, evolving into the many, culminated in the creation of a diversified world.

From times beyond time, the main purpose of this creation has been the liberation of souls from worldly bondage. Even as the cosmos, all souls are timeless. They are paśus bound by the noose of mala, or impurity. In order to free them from their fetters, Śiva, creating the cosmos, helps the cause of their redemption. Thus propounds the Śaiva Siddhānta.[1]

The concept of mukti in Tamil Śaivism differs from that in the other branches of Śaivism. The Pratyabhijña branch of Kashmir Śaivism asserts : "The Śivatattva that is had from the constant presumption that one is oneself Śiva, constitutes mōkṣa or liberation."[2] But in the Spandaśāstra Siddhānta, the ātman, through constant meditation upon Śiva, sheds the infection of the triple impurity and is transformed into the universal soul. This itself is the Bhairava dṛṣṭi. This Bhairava dṛṣṭi is known as mōkṣa. Though, in the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta, the soul's liberation from the hold of the triple impurity is taken to be mōkṣa, it seems to differ from the Kashmir Śaivism in respect of other factors. Jīva and Śiva are different in nature and remain different even after liberation—this is the Dvaita that Tamil Śaivism propounds. We notice here that it differs basically from the advaita spirit underlying the

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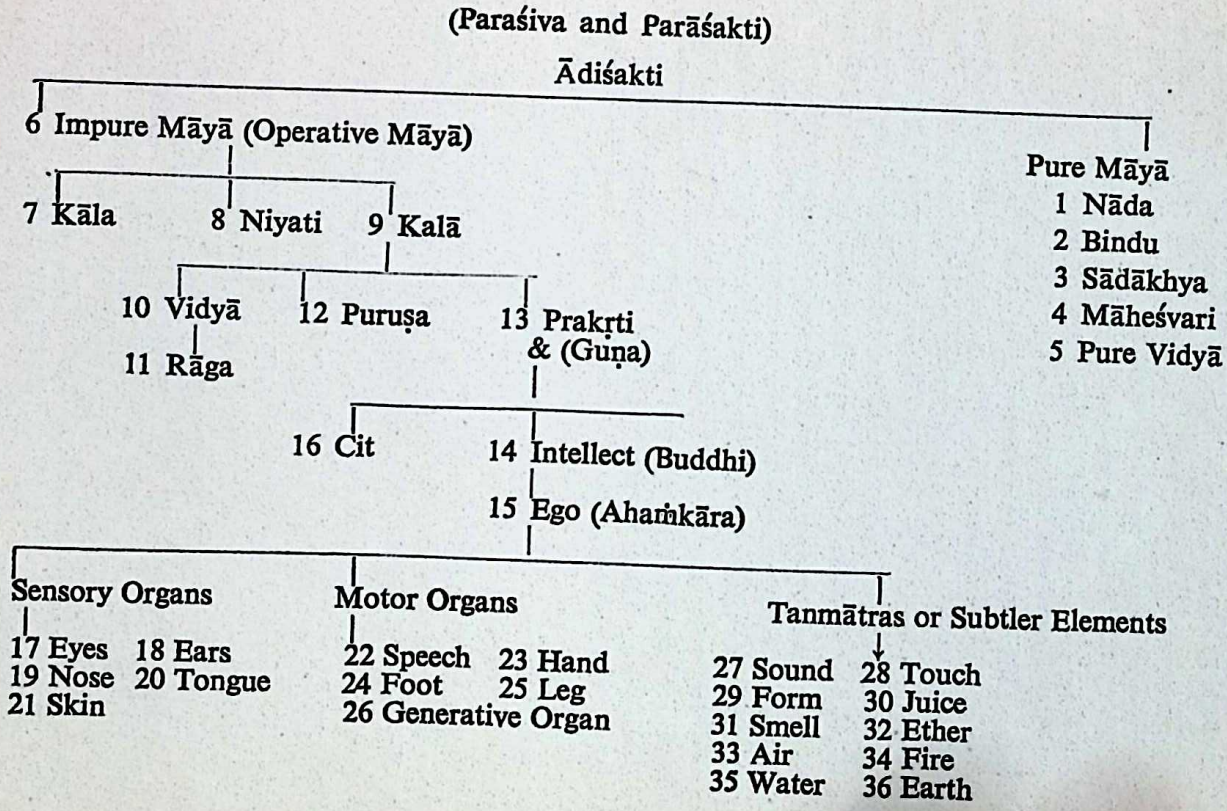
1. Paranjothi, V., *Śaiva Siddhānta*
2. Bhandarkar, R. G., *Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism, etc.*


(Paraśiva and Parāśakti)
Ādiśakti
6 Impure Māyā (Operative Māyā)
Pure Māyā
1 Nāda
2 Bindu
3 Sādākhya
4 Māheśvari
5 Pure Vidyā
7 Kāla
8 Niyati
9 Kalā
10 Vidyā
11 Rāga
12 Puruṣa
13 Prakṛti & (Guṇa)
16 Cit
14 Intellect (Buddhi)
15 Ego (Ahaṁkāra)
Sensory Organs
17 Eyes
18 Ears
19 Nose
20 Tongue
21 Skin
Motor Organs
22 Speech
23 Hand
24 Foot
25 Leg
26 Generative Organ
Tanmātras or Subtler Elements
27 Sound
28 Touch
29 Form
30 Juice
31 Smell
32 Ether
33 Air
34 Fire
35 Water
36 Earth

words "'aham brahmāsmi', or 'I am Brahma', and 'tattvamasi', or 'that thou art'."

Veeraśaiva Siddhānta has gone a step further in this respect and attempted to strike a synthesis, removing the differences that exist among all these approaches.

Synthetic Approach of Veeraśaivism

The brilliant *renascence* of the Veeraśaiva religion in Karnataka came about in the 12th century. It might have been in existence long before this period. But it cannot be specifically stated now by what name it was then referred to. Some of the thoughts and practices belonging to the Pāśupata religion which is mentioned in the *Mahabharata* seem to prevail among the Veeraśaivas even now. Nittura Nanjanacharya (1725) has referred to Veeraśaivism as Mahāpāśupata. Therefore, it may be inferred that the Pāśupata faith is also associated with the evolution of Veeraśaivism. The name Veeraśaiva, or Lingavanta, seems to have come into vogue later on. Madhava, of the 14th century, without referring to Veeraśaiva in his *Sarvadarśanasaṁgraha*, has made mention of the Lakulīśa and Kāḷāmukha faiths believing that there was no difference between Veeraśaivas and Kāḷāmukhas.[1]

The *Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi* is a book in Sanskrit expounding Veeraśaiva Siddhānta, in which the etymology of the term Veeraśaiva is given as under :

"viśabdēnōcyatē vidyā, śiva jīvaikyabōdhikā
tasyāṁ ramantē yē śaivā veeraśaivāstute matā"

i.e., the letter 'vee' teaches the art of the union of Śiva and and jīva which is of the nature of oneness of Linga and Anga. Those who delight in such an art are said to be Veeraśaivas.

Thus, Veeraśaivism is an ancient faith. S. N. Dasgupta observes, "The kernel of Veeraśaiva thought is almost as old as the Upanishads and it may be found in a more or less systematic manner by way of suggestion in the writings of Kalidasa who lived in the early centuries of the Christian

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1. Nandimath, S.C., *Kannaḍa Nāḍina Caritre*, Part II

era."[1] In Sūtasaṁhita, which is supposed to belong to the 6th century, we trace the subtle shades of this thought.

The religious revolution that took place in Karnataka in the 12th century gave it an added sharpness and brilliance. The great band of Śaraṇas who rallied together under the leadership of Basavanna enriched the Veeraśaiva faith by their mystic utterances.

By that time all the other branches of Śaivism were already known in Karnataka. The influence of Tamil Śaivism of the neighbouring region was considerably high. The sixty-three pioneer saints of that religion were also being venerated here. It is learnt from the inscriptions that the Śaiva faiths, like Kāḷāmukha, Kāpālika, etc., were already prevailing even earlier, from about the 6th and 7th centuries. In the copper-plate inscription of Nāgavardhana, the brother of Pulikeshi II (about 639 A.D.), it is recorded that a village near Igatpuri of Nasik District was gifted to the service of Kapaleshvara and for the maintenance of the great ascetics of the temple.[2] This denotes that the Kapālikas were already secure in a much advanced position by the 7th century.

The Kāḷāmukha faith was also in vogue in Karnataka. Dr. Bhandarkar remarks that, as Ramanujacharya had observed before, there is no difference between Kāḷāmukha and Kāpālika; and that the same sect has been called by different names. But Dr. Nandimath, not agreeing with this view, has clearly stated that the two are different.[3] The description of Kāḷāmukhas is found in books like the *Prabodha-Candrodaya*, *Mālati-Mādhava*, etc. There seems to be absolutely no relation between this description and that of the Kāḷāmukha gurus that is found in some of the inscriptions. Kāḷāmukha gurus were in a position to command honour and the highest devotion from different kings and their vassals. That kings gave them gifts, after washing their feet, is well described in inscriptions.[4]

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1. Dasgupta, S.N., *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. V
2. Bhandarkar, R. G , *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism etc.*
3. Nandimath, S. C., *Handbook of Veerśaivism*
4. ibid. "The technical term '*Kālaṁ, karci*' used in the inscriptions at the time of donating a gift to the teachers of this (kāḷāmukha) sect."

Though Veeraśaivism and Kāḷāmukha Śaivism, principally, differ from each other, yet, it may be said, the Veeraśaivism of Basavanna's time was ready to absorb the influential Kāḷāmukha sect.[1] Several Kāḷāmukha maṭhs were converted into Veeraśaiva maṭhs. Pandits have admitted that the conversion of the Kāḷāmukha maṭh at Puvalli of Belgaum district into a Veeraśaiva maṭh is a living testimony.[2]

Thus, by the time of Basavanna, Veeraśaivism had gained strength enough to swallow all other Śaivisms; and Basava's revolution, it may be observed, completed it.

Although Veeraśaivism resembles Tamil Śaivism in many respects, yet it has followed its own path in a few respects, like Ṣatsthala, Aṣṭāvaraṇa, Pancācāra. In respect of Śiva, jīva and jagat, it has discussed the concepts of these three in a very comprehensive manner.

The Veeraśaiva concept of liberation is completely different from that of Śaiva Siddhānta. Veeraśaivism does not accept the contention of Śaiva Siddhānta that Śiva and jīva are different. Veeraśaivism propounds that One evolves into the many and that the many return again into the One by way of involution. Though Śiva and jīva appear to be different in the beginning, they yet culminate in identity or abhēda in the end. Oneness between Anga and Linga must come about. All the statements of Śruti indicating difference as well as non-difference are synthesised in the Veeraśaiva Siddhānta. That is why Śrīpati Pandit's words

"veeraśaivaika siddhantē sarvaśruti samanvayaḥ !

(i.e. in the Veeraśaiva philosophy alone there is a synthesis of all scriptures) are true beyond doubt.

The nature of the Śivatatva of the Veeraśaiva religion, which is the path of synthesis of all faiths and śrutis, will be discussed in subsequent chapters in the light of the Śaraṇas' vacanas.

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1. ibid. "It is interesting to note that this influential sect (kāḷāmukha) was absorbed by the post-Basavanna Veeraśaivism."
2. Malwad, S.S., *Karnataka Sahitya Samskriti Darshana*

CHAPTER II

THE ŚARAṆA PHILOSOPHY AND DISCIPLINE

Philosophy

The fundamental problems of life provide a basis for the origin and growth of all religions. How does this creation come about ? Who is the Creator ? What is the nature of creation ? What is the relation between the creature, the creation and the Creator ? These and several other questions of this nature the reflective mind must face. The systematic discussion of all such questions may be said to be the foundation of all schools of philosophy. On this basis, faiths, religious practices and spiritual experiences thrive and take shape.

The nature of perfect religion mainly embodies two aspects. One is its philosophic aspect. Here we find an inquisitive spirit investigating basic principles. The ways and means undertaken to realise and experience the truths revealed through speculation form another aspect of religion. If one is known as 'philosophy', the other may be called 'divine experience'. The sublimer the philosophy, the loftier the experience. Hence, before we examine the form and shape of the Śivaśaraṇas' course of discipline and their mystic path, we must try to study, in its broad outlines, the nature of Veerasaiva philosophy.

In the foregoing chapter we saw how far Śaivism, through its different branches, had advanced on the path of spiritual investigation. Now we may try to learn in brief how Veeraśaivism, inspired by the mystic utterances of the Śaraṇas, has faced all these fundamental questions and what answers it has found.

The human mind, when it observes the wonders of the universe and finds that a certain omnipotent and all-pervasive law governs this order, must conceive of an unseen power which may be the prime cause of all this. Modern science, too, is not in a position to reject the truth of such a concept,

if it ever comes to it. Physical science analyses all things, and attempts to know their nature, their mutual relations and the general rules common to them ; but it cannot answer the why of them.

Science determines the age of the earth ; maps out its orbit ; measures the energy of the sun, the moon, the stars and the remotest planets ; calculates their distances from each other ; describes their nature and properties. But it cannot specify the basic cause of those properties and of the nature of this world. It means that it only undertakes to know the extent of the laws that have already extended their sway over the whole world. But it leaves out the question why that particular law came to be. Thus, science may be able to define the how of a thing, but not the why of it.

Philosophy takes up the question at the stage given up by science. To know the nature of the universe fully and completely is the philosopher's venture. The philosopher is not merely satisfied with the scientific discoveries that this universe is constituted of ions and each ion is formed of a proton, neutrons and electrons. No doubt these discoveries, too, are of outstanding value. That they have exerted a revolutionary influence upon philosophy is also true. Nonetheless, the philosopher's curiosity is not satisfied with this much. If the scientist ventures to discover what laws govern this universe and what powers function in it, the philosopher seeks to know what is the basic power that operates behind all these laws and serves as the prime force that guides all these varied powers, and finds out the true nature of that power in proportion to the strength of his power of meditation.

Today, science surveys the infinite vastness of the cosmos with the aid of telescopes. The sun, the moon and other planets visible to our physical eye, and the countless stars together constitute this one cosmos. But it is the astronomers' surmise that beyond this cosmos, there are scattered in space many more cosmic systems, limitless in number, inclusive of billions and billions of stars. If we just think for a moment that all these together constitute our physical universe, the mind shudders even at the mere concept of the infinite vista of

this universe. It is only possible for intuitive power, which transcends the range of the mind, to know it.

This universe can be compared to a wild-fig tree. Like the berries of the fig-tree, there are many cosmic systems throughout the universe. The root that holds all these cosmic systems together under its control is Paraśiva. The Upanishadic sentence, "ūrdhva mūlōvāk śākhā ēṣōśvataḥ sanātanaḥ" (i.e. the banyan-tree, with root turned upwards and branches turned downwards) is famous.[1] The aspiration behind this concept is none but to have an idea of the infinite expanse of the cosmos.

This limitless cosmos: when, how and why was it created? To this question man has not so far been able to find an abiding answer rational in all respects. From time to time he has posed this question. Every nation has formulated an answer to this question according to its geographical situation and native genius, ideals and aspirations, means and opportunities.

Indians have not thought that all such philosophical enquiries were meant for enquiry's sake. In India, philosophy and religion are not taken as different. One must grow and perfect itself from the other. Religion itself is a living force. Philosophy developed as its foundation and backbone. Therefore, religious practices acquired greater prominence than the dry speculations of philosophy. Nevertheless, the majesty of the truths discovered by philosophical enquiry has lent strength and significance to the religious practices.

Sankaracharya regarded this world as false and fictitious. God and the soul are not different. All this difference is only an appearance. Freed from the bondage of māyā, jīva himself becomes Śiva. Sankara propounded such an Advaita, or non-dualism. Madhvacharya claimed: This world is truth, God and the souls are different; even after liberation they remain apart from God. He arrived at this kind of Dvaita siddhānta. In between, Ramanujacharya established his Visiṣṭādvaita, or qualified non-dualism. The difference between souls is the result of bodies which are external screens. All

1. *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, 3.1

souls are equal in nature. Barring a few aspects, there is a great similarity between God and souls. Every soul must attain this resemblance with the divine except in a few respects. To attain this highest excellence is known as liberation. This can be had through Narayana's grace. This is the core of the Visiṣṭādvaita system, or qualified non-dualism. Thus, several other Acharyas expounded their theories. Though for all of them ancient books like the Upanishads were the unquestionable authorities, yet, each of them gave prominence to one particular element; the exclusion of others justified their own approach.

All these views, when looked at from different angles and in the light of experience, are indeed true. While Dvaita, which claims the soul and God to be different, is true, Advita, which asserts that the two are not different and that the difference is only an appearance, is also true; the Viśiṣṭādvita, which advocates that both are one except in a few respects, is equally true. So each doctrine is equally true in different contexts. Realising thus the truth of these doctrines viewed from different standpoints, Veeraśaivism has attempted to formulate a Siddhānta which synthesizes all the systems of philosophy. It is, therefore, called a Dvaitādvaita faith. It is also known by other names like Śivādvaita and Śaktivisiṣṭādvaita. The Śaraṇas of Karnataka have accepted this principle, and we find it vividly revealed in their vacanas.

Though the Śaraṇas have given greater importance to religious thoughts, ethical practices and divine experience than to philosophical enquiry, yet, they have given expression to their views in clear-cut terms in respect of the nature of the creation and the Creator and the relation between Śiva and jīva.

They do not accept the stand that "this creation is a fiction". The world may not be true in the form visible to our outward senses. The stand taken by Tamil Śaivism that it is not an absolute fiction like the rabbit's horns, is found in Veeraśaivism as well.

Śiva creates this world through the Power inseparably inherent in Him. This Power undertakes the work of creation,

manifesting itself spontaneously but without isolating itself from Śiva. Kāḍasiddhēśvara has endorsed this view in the following vacana :

"The formless Supreme
Beyond time and the timeless
Was unconscious of Itself
For aeons infinite.
It had a throb within
To be the cause of creation
For its own sport.
That throb confirmed into Cit ;
From Cit issued
Cinnāda, Cidbindu and Citkalā...."

This doctrine of a primordial conscious force is highly significant and its meaning is also extensive. One may find in it a meaning comprehensive enough to give a complete concept of creation. The whole world, mobile as well as immobile, is in the nature of power. In every object of the world abides one kind of power. Burning power in fire, cooling power in water, sustaining power in the earth, moving power in the wind, the power of heavenly bodies like the sun, machine power, electric power, the prodigious power inherent in every ion—all these powers are but the various forms of the one primordial Power.

Śiva has created this world through this Power. Yet, He has all along remained unsullied, and detached from the world. Thus, though the omnipresent and omnipotent Śiva pervades the entire world created by Himself, yet He transcends the bounds of the world without being caught in its tangled web. He fashioned the world through a single fragment of His power, has remained indivisible, perfect and whole. Sri Aurobindo points to the same power when he refers to its "unlimited possibility". Sri Urilinga Peddi has echoed the same opinion :

"Śiva can be the world,
Yet not be as well ;
Śiva can take a form,

Yet not take it as well ;
Śiva can make cosmic systems,
Millions over millions,
Yet not make them as well ;
Śiva can destroy,
Yet not destroy too ;
Śiva can worship as jaṅgama,
Yet Himself take worship as Śivaliṅga ..."

In the following vacana of Hāvina hāḷa Kallayya, we can understand the nature of this Power and see how Śiva's wish shaped itself into this power as tiny dew drops in the sky come together and freeze into a hailstone :

"Space as it thunders makes rain,
And, with the rain, appears,
As a hailstone.
So Your wish became Your power ;
Your identity is the cause of Thy name
Indivisible !
This led to Thy beginning,
O Mahālinga Kalmēśvara !"

The Śaranas have discussed the order of evolution of the world beginning with the question—What was the nature of the omniscient Śiva before the wish born in his mind fathered the Universe? Before the beginning of creation Śiva existed as Sarvaśūnyanirālaṁba as if he yet was not. Allamaprabhu has described the unmanifest nature of the Paraśiva :

"When neither time nor timelessness was,
When neither I nor mine,
When neither form nor formlessness was,
When neither void nor more than void,
Nor that which moves or moves not,
Then You were alone, as if You weren't,
O Guhēśvara !"

In fact, the phrase 'before the creation' does not specify any point of time. It is only a state our mind may conceive of. For, this world is not something that was created on a particular day; it is timeless, without beginning. This play of the

Creator has been going on since beyond time. He creates it and again withdraws it into Himself. The following words of Siddharāmēśvara are to the same effect :

"Like tree and seed You are.
Formless issuing into form,
Form into formless,
You become the void,
Transcending either,
My Lord Kapila Siddhamallikārjuna !"

Śiva has carried on this play of form and formless from eternity. Allamaprabhu, too, reveals the mystery of creation :

"If the sport starts
He is Umāpati (Umā's Lord) ;
If the sport ceases,
He is Svayaṁbhu (Self-begotten)".

Here, the fact that the world is the sport of Śiva needs to be noted. If the world is real, what is the cause of its birth ? This question confronts us. Tamil Śaivism has provided an answer to this question in its own way. It holds that the world is created in order to free souls from the triple impurity. The *Sāṁkhyakārika* registers the same view when it says, "As an actor retires from the stage after performing his part, Nature too plays her role and retires." But Veeraśaivism does not accept this view. If this world is said to have been created solely for releasing souls from bondage, what would there be after all these souls become pure and attain liberation ? Such a doubt obviously arises. To avoid this doubt, Veeraśaivism claims, "This creation is Śiva's sport." Śiva has created this world for his own ecstatic play :

"For his own mirth, created He the world ;
And for his mirth again
Enveloped round it all
The worldly circumstance.
For His own mirth He made me go
Through miseries without end . . .
Thus, when the highest deity—in the form

Of Cenna Mallikārjuna—
Had had enough of playing with the world,
He cut from it the noose of māyā !"

He absorbs the world when he finds the sport enough; if he so wills he creates it again. Thus, from times without beginning this evolution and involution have been going on.

Generally all the religions of India have accepted the triple entity of Prakṛti, Puruṣa and Parabrahma, or pāśa, pati and paśu. To these three Veeraśaivism has added one more substance called Śakti, or Conscious Force. Śiva has created this universe through His own Conscious Force. The omnipotent Śiva needs no excuse to create this world. He has brought it about for His own ecstatic play. This creation is true, and the creatures too are true — in this sense, there is difference or Dvaita. But this itself is not the ultimate truth. At the conclusion of Śiva's sport, all these involve finally into Śiva, and He alone remains in the end as the Highest Principle or the Ultimate Reality. In this sense, it is Advaita, or non-difference. Veeraśaivism thus attempts to synthesize Dvaita and Advaita, or difference and non-difference.

In the order of evolution, too, Veeraśaivism has set up an independent path. Tamil Śaivism, going beyond the twenty-five categories of Sāṁkhya, has claimed that the world has evolved out of the thirty-six categories. Veeraśaivism, too, has accepted those very thirty-six categories. But it has found its speciality in their revised order and arrangement. The 'Karaṇa hasige' of Cennabasavaṇṇa, Prabhu's 'Sṛṣṭiya Vacana' etc. point out the order or evolution of the world.

Śiva, who was in the state of Sarvaśūnyanirālaṁba in the beginning, evolved himself into Nirañjana Brahma. The mere wish that throbbed in the heart of this Nirajñana Brahma is itself the Nirañjana Oṁkāra Śakti (The Logos). From this Logos emanated the Śūnyalinga. The super-consciousness formed itself as body (anga) to that Linga. From this Śūnyalinga evolved the Niṣkaḷa Brahma having higher consciousness as its body (anga). This Niṣkḷa Brahma gave rise to Cinnāda, Cidbindu and Citkalā, through his higher consciousness. These,

along with their mother power, the higher Consciousness, turn out to be Mahalinga having Oṁkāra itself as its seat. This same concept is enunciated as follows :

"When what appears
As beings mobile and immobile,
As cosmic eggs having eight-fold
Body was not at all,
The all-Void unsupported Brahma alone was.
As ghee thickens into congealed ghee,
That Parabrahman Itself, the Truth-Light-Bliss
Incarnate, became Nirañjana Brahma.
The very wish fathered by that Nirañjana Brahma
Is Logos incarnate.
Through the mere wish of that Logos
The Śūnya Liṅga, the utterable spell incarnate
Was born.
The body of the Śūnyaliṅga is the Superconsciousness.
Through the mere wish of that Superconsciousness
The undivided Brahma, the manifest Logos
Was born.
Its body is the higher consciousness.
Its Cinnāda is 'ba'
Its Cidbindu is 'sa'
Its Cltkaḷā is 'va'
These three, with the basic cit,
Congealed into Mahāliṅga,
The whole, the effulgent
And of the shape of a globe."

From this Mahālinga issued the five Sādākhyas, namely, 'Karma sādākhya', 'Kartu sādākhya', 'Mūrti sādākhya,' 'Amūrti sādākhya', and 'Śiva sādākhya'. These formed themselves into the five faces of Sadashivamurti called Sadyojata, etc. From these five faces were born the five elements and from his eye and heart the sun and the moon. And from the secret face of this Mūrti emanated the Ātman :

"Earth born of Sadāśiva's Sadyōjāta face
Water born of Sadāśiva's Vāmadēva face,

Fire born of Sadāśiva's Aghōra face,
Air born of Sadāśiva's Tatpuruṣa face,
Ether born of Sadāśiva's Jśana face,
The sun born of Sadāśiva's middle of eyebrow,
The moon born of Sadāśiva's heart's centre,
The Ātman born of Sadāśiva's secret face :
What is constituted of five elements.
In this eight-fold body is the *cosmic egg*."

Thus the five elements, with the sun, the moon and the Atman, became the eight-fold body of Sadāśiva.

Though this description seems to differ from those of the Tamil Śaivism and other Śaiva systems, Sadāśivamūrti's five faces, the five Sādākhyas etc. are common to Tamil Śaivism as well as Veeraśaivism. Similarly, Veeraśaivism accepts the thirty-six basic principles as the Tamil Śaivism does. But in respect of their specification, we notice its speciality and how it slightly differs from Śaivism, the thirty-six categories of which have been already refferred to. Here the thirty-six principles of Veeraśaivism may be shown as follows :

The Effulgent Paraśiva

1. Śiva
2. Śakti
3. Sādākhya
4. Īśvara
5. Pure Vidyā

These five are the pure principles, or Cittatvas

6. Māyā 7. Kāla 8. Niyati
9. Kalā 10. Vidyā 11. Raga
12. Puruṣa

These are both pure and impure principles or Cidacit principles (Vidyātattvas)

13. Prakṛti 14. Intellect
15. Ego 16. Mind
17 to 21 5 sensory organs
22 to 26 5 motor organs
27 to 31 5 tanmatras
32 to 36 5 elements

Impure principles or Acit principles or Ātma principles

Thus, out of Śiva, the truth-light-bliss incarnate, through the throbbing of Śakti, the creation constituted of the thirty-six categories evolves itself.

What is the nature of the Creator who has been the efficient cause of such a creation? The Veeraśaiva concept in this respect is extensive as well as comprehensive. There is none who has known the beginning of the Creator, who, like a tortoise stretches out of this creation and again absorbs it within Himself and thus exhibits His sport. He transcends all logic and reasoning and is self-begotten :

"No birth and place for you ;
You are of yourself begotten ;
You have become thus, have become,
Thus have you become.
Your glory you alone know,
O Kapilasiddhamallinathayya,
The true Guru !"

Thus has Siddharama described the nature of the Creator. Now listen to Basavanna's words on the same :

"He is the priceless Liṅga, measureless,
Past understanding ; without
Beginning, middle and end.
Self-moved, eternal, without stain.
Begotten of no womb our Lord
Kūḍala Sangama !"

Prabhu's words in the same context are more memorable still :

"Of Thyself Thou art born and grown
O Child without father and mother !
With Thy peace as Thy content,
Thou wert all alone !
Thyself Thou shinest
Being impenetrable to those
Who venture to penetrate Thy Mystery.
True is Thy way to Thee,
O Guhēśvara !"

Veeraśaivism stretches a little the Śaiva concept of Godhead. Śaivism enunciates that, though Śiva abides in all things, yet they cannot themselves become Śiva Himself. To a certain

extent this statement is agreeable to Veeraśaivism also. But in the Veeraśaiva concept of Godhead it is only an initial step. Just a step ahead their concept of God branches off.

According to Śaivism, Śiva is completely isolated from this world, and through His conscious force, He will be an instrument annihilating the Karma of the jīvas. This divine power functions as an intermediary between Śiva, the immovable and immutable on one side and the movable world on the other, and accomplishes this purpose. Through this power, again, He can permeate all things as well as transcend them. When this force is absorbed in Him at the involution of this world, His permeation in all things too terminates, and Śiva remains as the mere Transcendent—thus states the Tamil Śaivism.[1]

Veeraśaivism has reckoned the nature of divine power in a more comprehensive way. Concurring with Śaivism in the initial stage, the Śaraṇas too affirm that Śiva pervades all objects and all things; however, they cannot themselves be Śiva.

Their way of expressing Śiva's omnipresence in all things is happy. This is how a certain Vacanakāra puts it :

"As fire in wood
It is ;
As ghee in milk
It is ;
Everywhere and in all things
The light of the Thing
Is perfect, forsooth—"

Cennabasavaṇṇa endorses this view :

"Like heat in a ray of light,
Like ghee in milk,
Like a picture in the painter,
Like light in the eye's iris,
Like sense in speech,
Was Thy sublimity,
O Kūḍala Cennasanga Lord!"

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1. Paranjoti V., *Śaiva Siddhānta*

Thus, although Śiva pervades all things, they cannot be of His nature. For instance,

"All is born of Śiva,
Yes, but will they be all Śiva ?
The farmer sows all seeds,
Yes, but will the crop be the farmer ?
The potter makes a pot,
Yes, but will the pot be the potter ?
The smith casts iron,
Yes, but will the iron be the smith ?
Śiva thus makes the world
And all that moves and moves not :
Yes, but will it all be Śiva ?"

asks Cennabasavaṇṇa.

This is an observation made by the Śaraṇas at a certain stage. But this is not the final stage. As the seeker advances on the path of discipline, the truth becomes more and more clear. Every object in the world turns out to be the very embodiment of Śiva. Thus we notice how the Śaraṇas attained to the stage where they saw nothing but Śiva in the world. Basavanna had soared to that height when he said :

"Whichever way I look,
Thou only art, O Lord !
The form of all the circumambient space
Thou only art, O Lord !
Thou art the universal eye,
O Lord, and Thou the universal face !
Thou art the arms of All, O Lord,
And Thou the feet.
O Kūḍala Sangama Lord !"

Even so, Sister Mahādēvi finds the very presence of God in nature :

"The entire wood art Thou !
The sacred trees within the wood art Thou !
The birds and beasts that sport
Among the trees art Thou !

O Cenna Mallikarjuna,
When Thou pervadest everything,
Why dost not Thou show Thyself to me ?"

The facets of the Creator are many. The Śaraṇa must be able to see the omnipresent God in all his facets. He should not forget that God can be an embodiment of the Supreme Light, pure and unsullied, transcending all these facets though he permeates them. The following words complete the concept of the Godhead as envisaged by the Śaraṇas :

"World-enshrined Thou art ;
World-pervasive Thou art ;
Cosmic-form Thou art ;
Lord of the world Thou art ;
Transcendent Thou art,
O Akhaṇḍēśvara, Lord !"

Thus He is omnipresent, the cosmic form and Lord of the cosmos. Nonetheless, He transcends the world. Not merely this, He is the primordial cause of the Universe. As Prabhu puts it :

"If the froth and foam
Emanate from the sea,
Can they be different from the sea ?
If the world is said to be born of Śiva,
Can it be different from Him,
The immutable, eternal, unsullied,
Without attributes, the perfect
And the unconditioned ?
Pray allow me such wisdom,
O Guhēśvara, and open
The eye of Supreme Knowledge !"

Though the waves emanate from the sea, yet they are in fact part of the sea itself. The sea sometimes absorbs them within itself and remains calm and unruffled. The relation between the creation and the Creator is of such a nature, observes Allama Prabhu.

About the nature of the jīva, too, Veeraśaivism has its own

theory, as it has in respect of creation, the Creator and their mutual relationship. In Śaivism, like the Creator and creation, the jīvas too are timeless and different from Śiva. They are bound by the triple-pain, and to free them therefrom is the purpose of creation. This is the Śaivite view. But the Veeraśaiva explanation is different. Veeraśaivism does not accept the view that the jīvas are different from Śiva from the beginning and shall remain so even at the end. As already seen, Ātman is also one of the eight bodies of Sadāśivamūrti, and Ātman was born out of his secret aspect the Śaraṇas have stated. This is known in Veeraśaiva terminology as Aṅga. Under the sway of Avidyā, it forgets its innate nature and turns out into jīvas; which means that jīvas are born out of a mere fragment of Śiva. And they are basically pure. The Śaraṇas assert that to regain their original purity is the aim of all jīvas. Here we discern the influence of Advaita.

But in respect of all other details, like the course of spiritual training and discipline, the Śaraṇas differ from Advaita:

"The undivided Sivatattva is one :
Through the throb of Its own consciousness will
Lo, it became twain.
One is the Aṅgasthala,
Liṅgasthala the other.
Thus it functions as
Aṅga and Liṅga,
The worshipper and the worshipped.
The Conscious Force of Paraśiva
Itself became twain.
Sheltered in Liṅgasthala it is known as
Śakti
Sheltered in Aṅgasthala it is known as
Bhakti.
The Śakti itself is regarded as
Pravṛtti, or Evolution.
That Bhakti itself is regarded as
Vivṛtti, or Involution.
Thus Śakti and Bhakti are twain."

The same view is clearly set forth by Sri Moggeya Mayideva in his "Anubhava Sūtra," or "The Mystic Aphorisms."

The conscious force, by virtue of its freedom, bifurcates into two. One is Kaḷāśakti, the other Bhaktiśakti. One shelters in Liṅgasthala and the other in Aṅgasthala. The Kaḷāśakti sheltered in Liṅgasthala is itself potent enough to create the world. In the heart of this Śakti, which is like a huge blaze, is enshrined the creative ability of the nature of *vāsana*, or latency. This is Pravṛtti Śakti. The Bhakti Śakti is like light and without latencies. It is pure, subtle, auspicious, excellent and of the nature of truth-light-bliss. It provides pleasure and liberation. It is Nivṛtti Śakti. These two Śaktis and Bhakti are Śiva's evolution and involution, his exhaling and inhaling. Śiva creates the universe through his Śakti and frees the Aṅga through Bhakti—so speaks Moggeya Mayideva of the nature of these two Śaktis.[1]

Like Liṅga, Aṅga is also a ripple risen from Śiva, the ocean of Spirit. Liṅga, in consonance with its native force, remains an embodiment of Śiva Himself, whereas Aṅga, being bound by the triple pain, as aṇava etc., loses its real nature and appears in the form of jīvas. Veeraśaivism does not call these bound souls 'aṅga'. If these are to deserve the term 'aṅga' they must have initiation at the hands of a Guru and become purified souls. This pure soul which is said to be 'aṅga' eliminates its imperfection through discipline and, as a drop of water mingling with the sea, is absorbed into Liṅga, the veritable embodiment of Śiva, and attains to perfection; being freed from pain and pleasure, it becomes Saccidānanda incarnate. This itself it Liṅgāṅga sāmarasya, or identity of Liṅga and Aṅga; this itself is liberation.

The Veeraśaiva concept of mōkṣa, or liberation, is different from that of Śaivism. Veeraśaivism does not accept the Śaiva opinion that individual souls remain separate from Śiva even after liberation.[2] Śiva and jīva are not fundamentally diffe-

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1. Śivānubhava Sūtra—21, 22, 23, etc.
2. Paranjothi, V., *Śaiva Siddhānta*

rent and do not remain so in the end. The Śaraṇas' word declares :

"Several ornaments made of gold
Melt and are gold again ;
The hailstone born of water
Melts and is water again ;
The Śaraṇa born of Light
And akin to Light,
Absorbed into the Light,
Became the Great Śivayōgin,
O Mahāliṅga Guruśiva Siddhēśvara Prabhu !"

Gold and gold ornaments, water and hailstone are different in shape but not in kind. Fundamentally, they are one and the same. For a brief period, when they acquire form, ornaments and hailstones are known by their separate names. The souls, being absorbed into Śiva, become Śiva Himself as

"The digit in the moon
Becoming the moon himself
Being absorbed in it ;
The sun's ray becoming the sun himself
Being absorbed back in it ;
The lustre of fire
Becoming fire itself
Being absorbed back in it ;
The glow of light
Becoming light itself
Being absorbed back in it ;
The river born of the sea
Becoming the sea itself
Being absorbed back in it"

when they break their bondage. The soul tears its bonds when it ascends the steps Ṣaṭsthala. Bhakta, Mahēśvara, Prasādi, Prāṇalingi, Śaraṇa and Aikya—these are the six steps. The last one is the liberated state. The practicant here attains to the stage of "Śivōhaṁ," or 'I am Śiva'. In that stage, Śiva and jīva are not different from each other but one and consubstantial and have attained perfect oneness.

Havinahalla Kallayya has beautifully described this liberated state :

"When a thief made of camphor
Is bound in hay, and fire, the aid
Comes and releases him,
The noose melts ; the thief hides in himself.
When the noose that is space, binds Śaraṇa, the space,
And Liṅga, the Space, frees Him,
Space and Space meet and merge.
The wealth called Mahalinga Kallēśvara
Has ever been the Void."

The thief made of camphor ! Bondage of hay for him ! The Śaraṇas are dolls of camphor. The bond that binds them is one of hay. No sooner does the fire of the inner intuition touch the noose than the bondage of hay of the triple pain burns away. Even so, the seeker too loses his form of camphor and dissolves. Void melts into Void and becomes the Greater Void. The sublimity of Liṅgānga Sāmarasya, or oneness of Liṅga and Aṅga, is suggested here. This vacana is like a never-failing spring. The more you dig, the greater is the meaning you find.

It may be noticed how the Veeraśaiva outlook is akin to pure Advaita here. But it differs from Sankaradvaita in so far as it does not subscribe to the view that the state of non-difference as Śivōhaṁ is alone a truth and everything else a myth. It asserts that all other stages, like bhakta, mahēśvara etc., are equally true with Aikyasthala, in the respective conditions of the aspirants. Moreover, the path evolved by Veeraśaivism to attain that godhead is also totally different from that of Advaita ; it is unique of its kind. This is the Ṣaṭsthala system.

This sixfold hierarchy may be regarded as a flight of six steps that a jīva is to ascend in his pilgrimage towards the Divine. We find in them all states of mind beginning from the anguish of a devotee who, forgetting his true self, torments himself in self-imposed ignorance that his life is full of grief, to the final bliss and peace resulting from the realisation that he is himself the Divine Will that pervades the entire universe. In this Ṣaṭsthala system equal importance is given to bhakti, kriyā

and jñana, or devotion, work and knowledge. The synthesis of all these is the special mark of this system.

If we are to group the six *sthalas*, bearing in mind the progress of the seeker's mental evolution, we have to classify them mainly under two heads : kriyātmaka, or related to work, jñānātmaka, or related to knowledge. As Dr. S. C. Nandimath says, "The first three—bhakta, mahēśa and prasādi—are kriyātmaka[1], where work in the form of worship etc. forms the prominent feature. The latter three—prāṇaliṅgi, Śaraṇa and aikya—are jñānātmaka, where knowledge plays a dominant role. But it does not mean that the kriyātmaka sthalas are bereft of knowledge and the jñānātmaka sthalas, of work or kriyā. Work is prominent in the former and knowledge in the latter. Of course, knowledge persists in work, and work in knowledge.

We find a brief account of the evolution and development of the seeker's mind in the Ṣaṭsthala system, or sixfold hierarchy. Without attempting to specify its terminological details and sub-heads, we may make a broad and nodding acquaintance of these sthalas through the words of the Śaraṇas themselves.

The following words of Gulura Siddhaviranarya, the fourth compiler of the *Śūnyasampādane*, briefly summarises the essence of the Ṣaṭsthala Siddhānta :

> "Becoming a Bhakta by his faith ;
> a Mahēśvara by steadfastness in that faith ;
> a Prasādi by vigilance in that steadfastness ;
> a Prāṇaliñgi by self-experience in that vigilance.
> a Śaraṇa by awareness in self-experience:
> the mystery abiding in a state of will-lessness,
> when that awareness has been merged in Truth,
> that is Aikyasthala."

Here the words, "Becoming a Bhakta by his faith" denote the first and foremost characteristic feature of Bhaktasthala.

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1. The first three-(bhakta, mahéśa, prasādi) are known as kriyātmaka—the stages where action in the form of worship etc. form the prominent features. It does not mean that kriyā is absent in the later stages, or jñāna in the preceding ones. They are blended together from the beginning to the end In the first three places kriyā gets the upper hand. In the last three jñāna.—Nandimath, S. C., *Handbook of Veerasaivism*

Implicit faith in that Supreme Spirit is the fundamental basis of bhakti. The bhakta, being pained by the sight of the miseries prevailing in life, seeks the shelter of that omnipotent Power which may be the primal source of all temporal powers and acts. Being engaged in kāyaka, or dedicated labour sanctified by truth and piety, he attempts to know that spirit at closer quarters through his own right action and virtues, like love, patience, forgiveness, compassion and freedom from the ego. The following words of Adayya rightly reveal the nature of a Bhakta ;

"No attachment for body,
Non-ego in mind,
No fear in prāṇa
No desire in chit,
Indifference to pleasure,
unrestrained will, and
Bliss in Knowledge
Once these are attained,
Lo ! Saurāṣṭra
Sōmēśvara Liṅga isn't apart."

This disciplined pursuit of the Bhakta advances still higher and more firmly in the Mahēśvarasthala. A firm confidence and a determined faith in the ideal envisaged are absolutely essential for a Bhakta. Man's mind is ever restive and runs in a thousand directions. But a true seeker should bridle his mind and focus it on the Supreme Spirit with a single-pointed faith. Mahēśvarasthala stresses the need of faith. In the words, "a Mahēśvara by steadfastness in that faith," Gulura Siddhaviranarya has emphasized the urgency of faith.

Similarly, another Śaraṇa, Devara Dasimayya by name, states :

"What if a zealous Bhakta
In the heart of a forest dwell ?
It shall be deemed a town.
If a Bhakta without zeal
Dwell in a town,
It shall be deemed a dense jungle
O Rāmanātha !"

It is enough if a Bhakta has zeal, he will march on along the path of discipline, braving all the ordeals and obstacles that he may come across, not being cowed down by the ups and downs of life. Even the dense forest in which he dwells will be turned into a beautiful town. He has the fervour of a righteous power which can boldly face any hazard that comes to him and overcome it.

"Fearing the body's pains, I do not say
'Protect me Lord !'
Fearing the want of means of life, I do not say
'Grant me, O Lord !'
'As the heart is, so is the fruit'.
Let fever come or wealth I do not say
'I want or do not want.'
I do not hope for it
Either from man or God—If I do so,
May Thy curse fall upon me, Lord
Kūḍala Saṅgama !"

These words of Basavanna aptly reveal the steadfast mind of a Mahēśvara. Unmindful of risk or hazard, joy or pain, he marches on with one aim, one will, with perfect equanimity and poise. He is prepared even to pledge his life and, if need be, gladly welcomes death. Such unswerving faith and resoluteness are noticed here.

Thus, the mind of the seeker who has become a Bhakta by virtue of his faith in God and advanced on that path with faith and honesty of purpose, evolves and opens itself for the rays of the divine to enter. It gives him a new vision of life. His heart shall be enriched by the wealth of his spiritual experience. We do not find here the anguish and the consequent tremor of a Bhakta. The sense of I and mine is annulled in him. He does all his work with the spirit of 'dāsōha' or 'I am thy slave'. Without craving for reward for his work, he accepts everything as God's grace. Such an unruffled tranquillity of soul we find here. This is Prasādi-sthala.

A Prasādi takes refuge in God with 'Sāvadhānabhakti', or vigilance in devotion. He finds that he can realise God through his kāyaka, or dedicated labour, and wherever he is. Without

work man cannot live even for a moment. But work should not become a bundle of hurdles but a guiding pilot. In marshalling and moulding them lies the wisdom of human life. We find in this Prasādi the seeker who has mastered work. Work done with a pure heart and mind untainted by self-interest does not lead to the bondage of karma. Such work alone is valued as kāyaka, or dedicated labour. Even the meanest work of this nature shall become worship. Everyone must be engaged in his respective work. No one has a right to live on another's charity or under another's obligation without exerting himself. Irrespective of the type of work and unmindful of its nature, the seeker should persist in it and through it alone should he advance in his divine pursuit.

Let it be only a *kāre* leaf
If it come from dedicated work,
Is worthy to be offered
To Liṅga. But not the one that comes
Of covetousness,
Therefore, the thing
That comes of dedicated work,
Righteous and pure, is ever
To Candēśvaraliṅga
Consecrated food !"

Thus run the words of a Śaraṇa in praise of kāyaka.

The Śaraṇas have used the word 'Prasādi' in a very comprehensive sense. What is offered to God and received in return is Prasāda ; and he or she who receives it thus is a Prasādi. But it is not the complete meaning of the term. One of Prabhu's vacanas reads :

"Prasāda they call what is served ;
And what is left over, too
They call Prasāda, But these
Even a cat accepts !
Who understands the tie
Uniting what is served,
What left over, and what consumed,
He in Guhēśvara's eyes
Is a Supreme Prasādi."

If what is offered to the Guru or God becomes Prasāda, even a cat may eat it. Is it prasāda, then? Can a cat be called a Prasādi? The Prasādi is one who, having offered himself, knows the secret of transcending it—says Allama Prabhu. Devara Dasimayya echoes the same :

"To hug Thee in embrace,
It is true Prasāda
Lo, Rāmanātha !"

Thus to embrace God is the real Prasāda. One who has offered himself to God and looks upon the entire world as God's grace, as the precept "iśāvasyamidaṁ sarvaṁ" goes, is the true Prasādi. And such a lofty ideal we see in the life of Prasādi.

By the time he crosses these three sthalas, the seeker comes to a specific mould and order. Shaping himself into a Bhakta through faith in God, advancing on that path with zeal, being engaged in true and pious work, the Sādhaka rises to a state rid of all attachments through the conviction that the entire universe is God's grace, or Prasāda. The life of such a seeker tends inwards. He realises through self-experience that in his own heart is enshrined the divine will of the Creator. He is astonished to find that the spirit that is inherent in the Brahmāṇḍa, or Cosmic System, also abides in Piṇḍāṇḍa, or the individual soul. To make it an inseparable part of himself, he undertakes the worship of Prāṇaliṅga. This itself is Prāṇaliṅgi-sthala.

The seeker, who so far meditated upon Iṣṭaliṅga when he was still tending outward, now turning his eye within, meditates upon Prāṇaliṅga through Anubhāvabhakti, or mystic love. It, in other words, means that he now finds within his own heart the divine power of Iṣṭaliṅga, seated on his palm as an emblem of the universe. Merging his Prāṇaśakti, or psychic force, with Liṅga, and the power of Liṅga with his Prāṇaśakti, he meditates upon their undifferentiated state. This itself is the worship of Prāṇaliṅga :

"As he intoned Thy name
Merging Liṅga with Prāṇa
And Prāṇa with Liṅga,
It became Prāṇaliṅga.

That Liṅga penetrating all the senses,
These turned into divine senses.
As Liṅga establishes itself within
Like a myrabolam on one's palm,
He knows not he bears it,
O Nijaguṇa Svatantra Siddhaliṅgēśvara,
Thou being the Prāṇaliṅga."

The differentiating eye prevailing so far in the foregoing three sthalas now leans towards non-difference. 'I am one and God is the other', such a Dvaitic bent is essential in the early stages of the seeker, as Bhakta, Mahēśvara and Prasādi. But henceforth, he as a Prāṇaliṅgi realises the non-difference between the two :

"Pervading within, you manifest yourself without,
Forming at the focus of my eye,
You shine at my mind's apex,
A light effulging in Brahmarandhra
Thou alone, O Uriliṅga, Lord!"

says a certain Śaraṇa. The Prāṇaliṅgi discovers that the Divine Power that abides within himself is Śiva, the Supreme Light. Prabhu has vividly depicted the nature of a Prāṇaliṅgi here :

"To a flowing stream
All body is legs ;
To a burning fire
All body is tongues ;
To a blowing wind
All body is hands . . .
O Guhēśvara,
To your Śaraṇa
The whole body is Liṅga."

The way of meditating upon Prāṇaliṅga, the details of yogic practice and the nature of Śivayoga to be undertaken by the seeker to attain to this state, are referred to in this sthala.

If we notice in the Prāṇaliṅgisthala the seeker turning his eye upward towards Advaita, in the Śaraṇa-sthala we find Advaita to be the seeker's self-experience. He transmutes himself into "a Śaraṇa by awareness in that self-experience," observes

the compiler of *Śūnyasaṁpādane*. The nature of reality which was comprehensible to the intellect so far, now becomes part of his self-experience. Now he realises with effortless ease and as part of his innate self that he is a direct particle of the divine spark of Śiva which is the efficient cause of this cosmic order. Through the intuitional knowledge of his native glory he is now freed from the fetters of karma as well as from the infection of the triple impurity. He is now 'not bound though embodied, nor polluted though moving.' Thus he attains to the state of jīvanmukti or liberation in life. The following words reveal the nature of a Śaraṇa. :

"The Śaraṇa prefers neither Here
Nor Hereafter.
He longs, yet longs not.
He wills, yet wills not.
Immaculate and unsullied
He lives, yet lives not.
Thy Śaraṇa, O Siddha Sōmanāthaliṅga !"

"He is not bodied, nor disembodied he.
He is no teacher, nor non-teacher he.
Desire he has not, nor desireless he.
He's not the unwinking angel come
Armed with a purpose here.
He has neither evil qualities, nor
Lo, any qualities at all !
O Kūḍalachannasaṅga
Behold Thy Śaraṇa !"

The Śaraṇa is not interested in outward show. There is no rule that he should smear bhasma or wear rudrākṣi compulsorily. His entire life being dedicated to Śiva, it is revealed in every act of his :

"He is Śaraṇa,
If all he does
Becomes bhasma,
And all he sees
Becomes Rudrākṣi,"

says Siddharāmayya. At the touch of the Śaraṇa all work

becomes holy ; the spot he treads becomes a sacred place. All his words and deeds being sublimated into the nature of the Divine, it manifests itself at every step.

"When tanks and streams and wells
Lay themselves bare, you see
Pebbles and weeds and oyster shells ;
But when the ocean-bed lies bare,
It is gems you see !
When Kūḍala Saṅga's Śaraṇas
Lay bare their hearts and speak,
It is Liṅga that you see ! "

Though the Śaraṇas have attained such a height of knowledge within, they are still engaged in their usual external work. But this does not lead to bondage and is not inspired by any motive of self. Even after his life's purpose is accomplished, the sādhaka must be engaged in some unattached work, at least, for the good of the world. This is the ideal of the Śaraṇas.

" He goes far
Who has both eyes and legs,
He cannot—
With one of them missing.
Even so, of what avail
Mere work without knowledge ?
It's the blind man's walking ;
Of what avail
Knowledge without work ?
It's the lame man's living.
To be one with Nijaguru
Svatantra Siddhaliṅgēśvara,
You need both
Knowledge and work."

This is the relation between knowledge and work. Thus, the Śaraṇa turns out to be an accomplished one who, having attained his life's fulfilment, is ready to bestow his divine experience upon the world through his righteous acts.

The final stage of the sādhaka on his flight to the Divine

is known as Aikyasthala. The Śaraṇa who has realised that he is himself a veritable embodiment of Liṅga through Ānanda-bhakti, now becomes consubstantial with Liṅga through Samarasa-bhakti. This is the ultimate step of the mystic experience. This alone is Liṅgāṅga Sāmarasya, or consubstantial union of Liṅga and Aṅga. This is described by the Śaraṇas :

> " As ghee mingling with ghee,
> Milk with milk, oil with oil,
> Water with water, light with light,
> Space with space. O Mahāliṅga
> Guruśiva Siddhēśvara Prabhu,
> What shall I say of Prāṇa
> Being consubstantial with Liṅga ? "

Like a hailstone dropped into the sea, the Śaraṇa sinks himself, becomes that ocean itself, annihilating all sense of difference. This Aikyasthala describes the highest stage that man can ever reach in his life.

This is a brief account of the Ṣaṭsthala, or the sixfold hierarchy. This may be a flight of steps that a jīva has to ascend in its pilgrimage to the Divine. This pilgrimage of the Divine-seeker begins with Dvaita, or difference, and ends in Advaita, or non-difference.

The Śaraṇa Path of Discipline

The philosophy that stood as the basis for the Śaraṇa path of discipline, did not remain a mere matter of academic inquiry to gratify the intellect, but became the core of the Śaraṇas' way of life, a source of energy that overflowed their hearts. They practised what they said. The ideal that they set up by way of their metaphysical quest was achieved in their daily life.

The Śaraṇas had stood at different levels of life and followed different vocations for their maintenance. However, their temporal life did not make them stray from the path of discipline. They converted the sphere of their worldly life into a spiritual centre of penance through zealous discipline and steadfast faith. We find in their pursuit how an individual of

great genius can transform any situation he is placed in, into a voluntary path of his own discipline. This is an element to be carefully noticed in the study of the Śaraṇas' way of spiritual training.

Even so, there is another important element in their method which commands our attention. As already seen, the philosophy that stood as the foundation of their spiritual progress is the Ṣaṭsthala Siddhānta. All the Śaraṇas advanced on that spiritual ascent step by step. But in their very ascent each revealed his or her own individuality and bent of mind.

If we are to reckon the powers latent in man from the point of view of spiritual discipline, we find a few broad types. In some, logic, reason, and the desire to weigh everything from the point of view of cause and effect and advance after thus satisfying the intellect, predominate, whereas in some we notice that the heart's longings and love's call prevail. In some others, the power of will may be outstanding. On the basis of such differences in these intuitional powers, the yogic paths, such as Jñānayōga, Bhaktiyōga, Karmayōga and others, may be said to have been formulated. Among the Śaraṇas, too, we find the seekers of such diverse bents of mind.

The Śaraṇas' mystic way has essayed to bring about a unity in all these powers. Of course, it has accomplished an integral yoga which is the synthesis of all these powers. But nonetheless we do discern that the individual peculiarities of mental moulds prevail in their path to a certain extent. If, selecting here a few leading Śaraṇas, we trace the course of their spiritual discipline and study the nature of their accomplishment, we shall very well be able to understand their mystic way. We may pick up Basaveshvara to begin with.

Basavanna

We find persons of different natures among the Śaraṇas. There is diversity in their mystic ways also. But it is noticed that all have uniformly exalted bhakti. A certain Śaraṇa has said:

"Bhakti has made Śiva
Speak and shiver;

Bhakti has made Śiva
Eat and wear ;
Bhakti has made Śiva
Sing and dance ;
Without Bhakti there's
No renunciation, no knowledge.
Bhakti is, therefore,
Liberation's mother."

Here the term bhakti has acquired a broad sweep of meaning which synthesizes all the paths of renunciation, knowledge, meditation and karma. Basaveshvara was a living representative of such a bhakti.

All the Śaraṇas had known the value of Basavanna's path of devotion and were aware of its perfection. "Basava is the rich harvest of bhakti," affirmed Cennabasavaṇṇa. "Basava is bhakti-incarnate, eternity-incarnate and joy-incarnate," declared Siddharāma. Maḍivāḷa Mācayya testifies :

"Whichever way you look'
Behold the creeper : Basavanna !
You pick it up and lo,
A cluster ; the Liṅga !
Pick up the cluster, and oh,
The juice that brims up in it."

Anywhere you squeeze Basava's words, the juice of bhakti brims over. The words of Kāḍasiddhēśvara sound as if they were meant to extol Basava's bhakti :

"If one is a bhakta
One should be like a plantain ;
If one is a bhakta
One should be like a jaggery cake ;
One should be like a ripeñed mango."

It is soft to the touch and sweet to the taste.

The note of bhakti that pulsates through Basavanna's vacanas strikes the same note of divine experience in the heart of the readers. We find in them a power which is plain and direct, yet compelling enough to communicate experience from heart to heart; since all the levels of his discipline, from the

troubled anguish of the heart to the serene tranquility of divine experience, are truly revealed in them. They may be said to serve as the living manual of bhakti's path for the guidance of seekers.

Every individual object and incident in the world stands as a problem challenging the ingenuity of rational man. Whenever he sees pain and pleasure, ups and downs, justice and injustice, rubs and frictions and man's helplessness in facing them, his mind becomes a cockpit of many thoughts and feelings. It goes to basic questions such as—"Wherefore do I live?" and "What is the meaning of this life?" When he looks at life with an integral outlook he discovers the hand of the puppet-master who holds the strings that govern all these and makes them play. He unreservedly surrenders to Him himself and all he has. He gathers all His love that is scattered in various objects and focusses it upon him. This is known as bhakti, or devotion. "Bhakti, or devotion, is of the nature of the highest love," defines Nārada Bhakti Sūtra. "If you are to possess the trove of bhakti, trust the collyrium of love for Śiva," advises Basavanna.

Thus, if we are to centre our highest love on some power we do not see, we must be moved by some sort of dissatisfaction of the world we see. Hence the first step of bhakti is a sickening indifference in respect of this external world and its earthly pleasures; some form of divine discontent; standing for a time at a small distance from saṁsāra to realise its evanescence and disgusting nature. This itself is in Veeraśaivism known as Saṁsārahēyasthala. We find in Basavanna's vacanas, very clearly, the divine discontent that has first of all grown up in his mind and its agitation.

> "Lord, this world
> Has caught me in its snare!
> Save me, O save me, Lord!
> All worth is gone, is gone!
> Your mercy, Lord, your mercy,
> Kūḍala Saṅgama!"

he implores. He continues in the same strain:

'The Rāhu of this world has swallowed me. When, then, will deliverance from this eclipse come? My plight is like a frog's in the shadow of a snake. Not knowing what today or tomorrow may bring, my life is gone bearing the burden of its burning flesh. The serpent of this world has bit me with the venomous fang of the five-fold sense. When shall this trouble of the world subside? My own mind obeys me not. It does not rest at one place. It leaps about as a monkey on a bough. It has clung to saṁsāra as dough is kneaded in a blanket'.

"Look you, my heart
Is like a country fig!
Search it with care,
There is no kernel there!
O Kūḍala Sangama Lord,
It's you have made
This outer form of mine
And placed me, you,
In this imposture of a world."

'Panting for a moment's pleasure I am exposing myself to distress without measure or bound.' For example:

"My life is like a dog
Licking a sword's sharp edge
For ghee!
My mind will not forsake
The bother of this world;
O Lord Kūdala Saṅgama,
Out of Thy mercy, rid
Me of this doggish life."

'Please make this mind a bee in the lotus of thy feet. The body's passions, the mind's passions and the sensual passions plague me. I have now become like a beast fallen into a bog.'

"Lord, O Lord,' I cry and cry.
Could you not answer 'Ay'?
I call and call and never cease:
Could you be dumb, O Lord
Kūḍala Saṅgama?"

"Alas ! Alas ! O Śiva, there is
No pity in you !
Alas ! alas ! O Śiva, there is
No mercy in you !
Why did you give me birth,
To travail on this earth,
A stranger unto heaven ?
Why did you give me birth ?
Hear me, Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama,
Could you not well have made
A tree or bush instead ?"

'Aren't the trees better than I? At least they provide shade to the traveller; why did you bring me to birth who are meaner or baser than they?'—he asks. Here is a picture depicting the troubled anguish of a seeker, which usually appears in his mind at an early stage of the course of his discipline. It is just the initial stage. The same Basavanna later on advances to the stage of declaring :

"This mortal world is but the Maker's mint ;
Those who earn merit here, can also there ;
And those who earn it not here, earn not these too,
O Kuḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

But it seems to be inevitable for a seeker to experience a sort of discontent and disgust when he sets out on the path of discipline. Here one may be reminded of the 'dark night of the soul' to which scholars in 'Mysticism', like Dean Inge usually refer. In the life of a seeker it is, as it were, a real, dark night. Once he passes through this night, the golden serene peace dawns upon him. Dr. Inge goes to the length of saying that the seeker who misses the anguish of this 'dark night' is not a real seeker at all and will never reach his goal.[1] Hence a certain disgust with the outside world and an indignant anger and anguish are indispensable. But this does not end in despair. The churning of the inward anguish gives rise to a spark which blazes the path of discipline ahead. We notice it happen in Basavanna's life also.

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1. Ranade, R.D., *Mysticism in Mahārāṣṭra*

Basavanna, who had asked under the stress of divine distress, "why did you give me birth to travail on this earth?" now discovered, through his Guru's grace, the ultimate aim of life and the way of attaining it. Dedicating his all to Lord Kuḍala Saṅgama, he sought refuge in Him with matchless love and absolute surrender :

"My father you, my mother too;
You also all my kith and kin.
Save you no kindred is to me,
O Kūḍalasaṅgama, Lord,
Do with me as you please!"

This unreserved surrender is the first step on the pilgrim's path. This is known as "prapatti" in the Vaiṣṇava school of bhakti. Here nothing remains for the bhakta to call his own :

"Yours are my weal and woe;
My loss and gain are Yours!
Yours too my honour and shame!
O Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama,
How can the creeper feel the weight
Of its own fruit?"

'Will a nut be ever a burden to the creeper? I have no independent existence. I am your mercy's child. Let me be a paltry parrot upon the mountains of mankind, and teach me Lord, to say God, God! Put me in devotion's cage and protect me. You are omnipotent. If you bless it, a dry log shall sprout; a barren cow shall be a milch cow, and even poison nectar. Do not sort out between virtue and vice in me. You are the physician of the spirit, able to minister to the disease of successive births. Pray, free me from this worst of diseases. Fettered by greed, I have become a bondman to the earth, pray rid me of this bond; thus, relying upon the grace of Kūḍala Saṅgama alone, he seeks refuge in Him. Though his faith in the omnipresence of the Supernal Power has now matured, the tremor of his mind is not gone yet.

If one is to remove this agitation of mind and advance on the path, one must be able to discern the hand of God in every object of this world. He must suppress all ego in him and fling

open his heart to welcome that Divine Power. Unless this 'I' dwindles, the Divine Grace that pervades everywhere will not penetrate our ego. As the limited 'I' perishes, the unlimited or universal 'I' evolves. Hence, to annihilate the ego is the duty of the seeker. Of course, it is an arduous task. At every step man has built the barriers of 'I', 'mine' and 'by me'. My own property, my position, my power, my beauty—and such other bars encage him. Tagore has aptly observed, "our possessions are our limitations."[1] Renunciation helps our growth and evolution, whereas selfish possession brings about deterioration. The words of Jesus, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven" echo the same truth. Wealth gives rise to pride and insolence ; youth and beauty, class and caste, even learning and genius, which should ordinarily lead to modesty, swell man's ego. It is quite essential for the seeker to be cautious enough to prune his ego wherever it crops up.

Such a conscientious precaution we notice at every step in the life of Basavanna. He had all the circumstances—wordly wealth, the highest caste, the topmost position as the Premier of his State, beauty and brains, learning and scholarship—richly favourable ground for his ego and pride to thrive. But, nonetheless, Basavanna was able to trample on their heads and put them down. See how he humbly replies to those who extol and flatter him :

" 'Mid mangoes I am a manure fruit :
How can I, without shame,
Reckon myself a devotee
Before Thy Śaraṇas ?
Before Kūḍala Saṅga's Śaraṇas
How can I be
A devotee ?"

He modestly admits that all his love for God has been the result of the Śaraṇas' grace :

"I am a poor wretch undevout, O Lord :
I've begged for alms at Kakkayya's house ;

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1. Rabindranath Tagore, *Sādhana*

I've begged for them at Cannayya's house ;
I've begged for alms at Dāsayya's too.
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord, because
The saints together all have given me alms,
My bowl is full !"

These are not formal words just to exhibit a seeming modesty. But every word he uttered came direct from the bottom of his heart. Listen to his self-abnegating humility :

"A lesser man than I
No, there is none ;
Greater than Śiva's devotees
No, there is none.
Witness Thy feet,
Witness my mind :
This is a test for me,
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama !"

Among all kinds of pride, the pride of caste and class is the most difficult to be broken. Especially during Basavanna's time, when the worth of a person was judged on the basis of caste alone, to break the pride of caste was next to impossibility. Basavanna, who rebelled against the blind and superstitious practice of deciding a person's position and worth on the strength of caste, and the caste on one's birth, himself cast away the pride of his own caste and proclaimed the real nature of religion. In his own words :

"They make me bear the brunt, O Lord,
Of being born in a superior caste :
Behold ! Kakkayya will not offer me
His cast-off food ;
Lo ! Dāsayya will not pour for me
His buttermilk ;
The reverend Cennayya will
Not look at me !
O Kūḍala Śaṅgama Lord,
Exalted Glory, alack, alack for me !"

Basavanna declares that he is infinitely lesser than Cennayya, Dāsayya, Kakkayya and such others who were then customarily

looked upon by all people as untouchables. This reveals the culture of his ripening heart. He knows fully well how "If what I have done comes to my mind, Śiva's drum ridicules me," and "Insolent devotion leads to Karma." Thus, a fragrant flower, however hard it may try to remain modestly behind the leaf, the wind spreads its fragrance in several directions. It attracts hundreds of persons. Basavanna did not lose his head by their praise and flattery. In normal circumstances he ought to have, or its slightest symptoms might have shown. But his ever vigilant heart, without letting them to take root, implores at the feet of God :

"With praise on praise, mine own
From sheer love set me up
Upon gallows of gold !
This praise of me enfolds me round and round !
Lord, Your regard, alas !
Has smitten me like a whetted sword !
Oh, Oh ! I'm hurt,
I cannot bear it any more !
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
If you do love me, come between
And bar this praise, O merciful !"

We can clearly notice here how Basavanna had extirpated even the remotest root of ahaṁkāra, or ego.

The sādhaka who, having dispelled his ahaṁkāra, is modestly advancing on his journey to the Divine, is quite likely to meet with odds and ordeals, trials and tribulations. They do come and should come. But he must not be cowed down by them in his resolution. The sādhaka badly needs a determined resolve, one-pointed faith and unflinching zeal. Undaunted by the hurdles he has come across in his march, he must accept them as helping hands and thus convert them into sources of strength. He must have invincible firmness and fortitude. Look at Basava's courage and conviction :

"Let fire come, or wealth come, I do not say
I want or do not want."

But if at all he is to beg, what does he beg at God's feet ? He

implores God to test him through hardships and difficulties :

"Let not even a broken pot
Be in my house ;
Place in my hands, O God,
One blade of grass.
Should I go out and beg 'For God's sake', there
Make them say, 'For God's sake, go !'
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

Like a stone fashioned into an idol by the thousand strokes of a chisel, the seeker's heart grows purer and fuller by going through the fire of pains and miseries. Being freed from all impurities, it is now prepared to reflect the cosmic will of the Divine and encompass the entire universe. At such a stage he eliminates all pain and pleasure and transcends all other dichotomies. When sorrows and testing times come, he must welcome them as Śiva's grace. Śiva subjects his devotees to several trials and searching tests, as Dēvara Dāsimayya puts it :

"Hara makes his devotee beg ;
Tests him on the touchstone
Like a piece of gold ;
Rubs him like a piece of sandalwood,
Cuts him like a sugarcane.
If he stand all tests
Uncowed and undaunted,
He lifts him up by the hands,
Our Lord Rāmanātha!"

Basavanna, too, echoes the same sentiment :

"If I say I trust Thee, love Thee,
I have sold myself to Thee,
You put my body to the test.
You put my mind to the test.
You put my money to the test.
If I fear not all these,
You yield to Bhakti,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord!"

Only if the seeker is loaded with devotion does Śiva melt to bhakti. In a sense, devotion looks very easy ; perhaps so easy

that it may be accomplished by all and sundry. But in another sense, it is extremely difficult. Unless one has an unflinching and stubborn faith, bhakti cannot bear fruit. It is a double-edged sword. Like a saw it cuts both ways going and coming. If only you invoke Him with faith will He answer your call. He turns a deaf ear if you call Him without faith and love. Your call cannot move Him. Thus admonishes Basavanna.

Thus the love of the seeker who has surrendered to God with one-pointed faith after eschewing egotistic pride, transcends the bounds and limitations of 'I' and 'mine' and hence has no ulterior motive and expects no reward. So long as we look at a thing from the point of view of its necessity for our worldly life, we cannot see the nature of the eternal truth underlying it. Similarly, if we try to measure the worth of a man merely from the utility point of view, we ignore his intrinsic worth as a man. We attempt to find out ways and means of exploiting his material use. But, on the contrary, when we look at Him with unselfish love as a conscious force, we see ourselves in Him. This is the power of love. Love gives us the eye to see the wonderful vision of the divine power everywhere, beginning from a tiny bud that is yet to blossom to the twinkling stars. In the following lines of the *Gītā*, the word 'Pandit' connotes one who has embraced the entire universe out of such divine love: 'Vidyāvinayasampannē brāhmaṇe gavi hastini/śuni cai'va śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ' or 'Sages see with an equal eye a learned and humble Brahmin, a cow, an elephant or even a dog or an outcaste.' This eye of love is like a capital investment for all sādhakas irrespective of the path—bhakti, jñāna or karma—he follows. It is the very foundation upon which he can build up any edifice of any size and structure through several modes of his sādhana, or discipline.

To erect an edifice through love on the foundation of love is known as Bhaktimārga, or the path of love. The bhakta, without involving himself in the logical investigation of the concept of the Divine and the dry pedantic discussions thereon, trusts God with unswerving faith and totally dedicates his undivided love to Him. Though this love is fundamentally unearth-

ly, yet it worships the Formless Ultimate Principle in a limited form and follows several worldly ways to manifest itself. The bhakta conceives several relations with God in terms of worldly relationship and expresses his love to Him. From this point of view bhakti may be classified into five modes, as dāsya, or the spirit of service; sakhya, or spirit of friendship; vātsalya, or spirit of filial affection; madhura, or spirit of bridal love; and śānta, or spirit of serene relationship. All these modes can be more clearly noticed in Dāsasāhitya, so far as Kannada literature is concerned.

We can trace these modes in Basavanna's way of bhakti. But the Śaraṇas have given greater prominence to the impersonal nature of God than to His personal nature. His (God's) personal form is a 'symbol'. Holding on to this *kuruhu,* or symbol, they yearned to realise the *aruhu,* or the Divine Consciousness which transcends *kuruhu.* In consequence, they did not stretch these modes too far. However, certain Śaraṇas have struck such note. In Akka Mahādēvi, sweet devotion is expressed in its highest form, as will be seen later. Basavanna, too, has surrendered to Kūḍala Saṅga as an humble yet dutiful servant, as a loyal and devoted wife.

"Is the master of the house gone out,
Or is he in?
Upon the threshold grasses sprout;
The house is just
A bowl of dust:
Is the master of the house gone out,
Or is he in?
When falsehood does infect your flesh
And your heart is a sensuous mesh,
The master of the House
Cannot be in, cannot be in,
Kūḍala Saṅgama, Lord!"

This body, the house, is an abode of Kūḍala Saṅga. The grass sprouting at the threshold, the dust filling the inside, have all made it unfit for His habitation. It must be cleaned and made fit for His dwelling. Then only does the Master return and

dwell therein—says Basavanna. The spirit of this vacana strikes a lovely lyric note. Similarly, in the words below, too :

"If a soldier takes to his heels,
It is an insult to his master ;
Pray, make me fight and win ;
Pray, impel me to fight and win,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
Without fraud
In body, mind and pelf."

We see his perfect servanthood. 'If a warrior makes a retreat without being able to face the fight, doesn't it mean a loss to the master? Even so you are master, I a servant ; if I run away being defeated in the battle of life, it is an insult to you'. Hence, Basavanna prays to God to prepare him to fight and win. Though we notice the tremor of a bhakta in this vacana, too, yet the goal is settled, the path clear. One must live here, yet win through, for which His grace is quite essential. Such a faith, direct and confirmed, is revealed here.

Basavanna has vividly delineated the 'sati-pati bhāva', or devotion between wife and husband :

"I've bathed in turmeric,
And decked myself in gold ;
But am like a woman lost
To the love of her lord !
I've smeared the sacred ash
And put on Rudrākṣi,
Yet I am without Your love,
O Śiva, my Lord !
There's none in my clan
Who survives having fallen.
Pray save me, O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
As you love me."

As a wife beautified with ornaments yearns for her lord, Basavanna, donning the Śaraṇa robes, longed for Saṅga's grace and thirsted for His coming with impatience. Being Śaraṇa, the wife, he prays to her lord, the Liṅga. Elsewhere :

"For once a loving husband, mark you, Sir,
Neglects to love :
Mine is the fault, the fault is mine !
Mine is the fault, the fault is mine !
Being wrapped up entire
In body, mind and wealth !
Unbounded is my humbug, Lord
Kūḍala Saṅgama !"

The husband who so far loved with all loyalty, gets indifferent. In which case the blame lies with the wife. Even so, Basavanna resolves to be a loyal spouse, able to win Kūḍala Saṅgama's perennial love.

Different from the aforesaid five modes of bhakti, nine other types known as śravana (hearing), kīrtana (singing), smaraṇa (remembering), pādasēvana (service to the feet), arcana (worship), vandana (salutation), dāsya (servility), sakhya (friendship) and arpaṇa (surrender) are also referred to. All these exercises in devotion are necessary if the bhakta's heart is to become pure and attain the power to win the Divine and dance to His tune. To hear the glory of the Divine, to hymn His praise, to meditate upon Him, to salute Him, to lose oneself in that bliss—through all these the bhakta evolves his spiritual or mystic abilities. Basavanna has full-throatedly praised the worth and importance of these in his vacanas. In brief, the bhakta's devotion runs in different channels in accordance with his bent of mind, the nature and ardour of his devotion, and the philosophical background that governs it. It is classified into five, nine, or three modes, which is just for the sake of convenience for philosophical investigation. It is just an artificial division.

For the path of discipline followed by Basavēśvara and other Śaraṇas, as already stated, the Veeraśaiva philosophy is the background. Therefore, their spiritual discipline has evolved in conformity with that background. Corresponding to the six sthalas in its philosophy, Veeraśaivism has laid down eight aids of faith to be followed in ascending those sthalas. Guru, Liṅga, Jaṅgama, Prasāda, Pādōdaka, Vibhūti, Rudrākṣi and Mantra—these are the eight aids of faith. They are not

bonds, but diamond-hard armour as it were, which protect the seeker in his onward march to the Divine.

Basavanna's bhakti advanced along these aṣṭāvaraṇas. He surrendered his body, mind and pelf to Guru, Liṅga and Jaṅgama respectively, and received in return Prasāda and Pādōdaka. He put Bhasma (Holy ash) and Rudrākṣi on his person as an outward symbol of inward purity and sanctified himself by repeating the five-syllabled sacred spell constantly and with love and devotion.

All sects, all faiths and the utterances of all seekers have worn themselves out in singing the glories of the Guru's significance in the spiritual pursuit to their hearts' content. They have suggested that spiritual knowledge must, directly through the look, touch and instruction of one who has realised it in his own experience, come home to the bhakta's experience. Basavanna, too, has extolled the importance of the Guru wholeheartedly. One of his vacanas runs:

"In making a pot,
The clay comes first;
In making an ornament
The gold comes first;
In knowing Śiva's path,
The Guru's path comes first;
In knowing Kūḍala Saṅgama
The fellowship of Śaraṇas
Comes first."

Again,

"Without the Guru's word,
Liṅga it cannot be;
Without the Guru's word,
Eternal it cannot be;
Without the Guru's word,
Observance it cannot be.
Will our Lord
Kūḍala Saṅgama approve
The doubly fouled who crown
A headless trunk?"

Hence, through the Guru's grace alone can one attain the image to be worshipped. There is no belief among Veerasaivas that Liṅga is a stone idol. The Guru draws out the conscious force inherent in the disciple and captures it in the Liṅga and instals it on his person. The disciple in a sense worships his own Self when he worships it. Realising his own Self, he soars to the height of Śiva. Only when the secret and mystery of this truth is understood, shall the purpose of Iṣṭaliṅga-worship be fulfilled. The Guru reveals this secret to the disciple. If this secret is not understood through the Guru, it is like "crowning a headless trunk,"—admonishes Basavanna.

The Iṣṭaliṅga worn by the disciple on his person after he has learnt its secret from the Guru, will alone be an object of homage. In one sense it is an idol, in another sense it is not. Though the highest power which is an embodiment of the Formless and Spotless is brought to form, the Veerasaivas have devised, through the Iṣṭaliṅga, the lofty method whereby they can retain the concept that essentially it is not form[1]. To wear such an Iṣṭaliṅga always on one's person and through it to meditate upon Prāṇaliṅga and Bhāvaliṅga, is the path laid down by Vereaśaivism Basavanna marched on the same path.

By the mere remembrance of Iṣṭaliṅga he is thrilled to his very being. "To awake with the first faint streaks of dawn, gather water and the hallowed leaves before the sun rises," to worship Liṅga, to offer eight-fold worship and sixteen-fold service, to feel content at merely looking at the worship, to sing in joy the songs of Śiva doctrines, to sport in glee before Śiva and to exchange words of Bhakti—this was his daily worship. The poet of devotion, Harihara, in his *Basavarāja Dēvara Ragaḷe*, or "Life of Basavarāja Dēva" has admirably extolled the splendour of Basavanna's worship from the bottom of his heart.

Basavanna, absorbed in Liṅga worship, did not forget the Jaṅgama in the least. He had read the term 'Jaṅgama' in its widest connotation. It was not a particular sect. The Jaṅgama is one who has become all-pervasive. The great one who,

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1. Shri Akkulayya Dixit has, in his book *Iṣṭaliṅga Vijñāna* dealt with the concept of Iṣṭaliṅga and its impact on life here and hereafter.

having annihilated his 'I' had embraced the entire universe yet transcended it, is the true Jaṅgama. Basavanna asks, "Is there harshness in Liṅga? Is there a caste in Jaṅgama?" Looked at from that point of view, in the exercise of Bhakti the fellowship of such experiences of the Divine becomes indispensable. That was why Basavanna stressed the necessity of service to the Jaṅgama for the fulfilment of Liṅga-worship. The power of Liṅga functions through Jaṅgama.

"My brother, you who gaze
Into the mirror, look
At the Jaṅgama;
For in Him Liṅga dwells.
Kūḍala Saṅgama's word
Says, 'The Immovable and
The Movable are one'."

After Liṅga-worship, the Jaṅgama should be respected with awe and reverence. One must bend like the plantain-bunch to the Jaṅgama. Unless this is understood, what is the use of learning the difference between dvaita and advaita? What is in a wreath of words? – asks Basavanna.

"If you pour upon it,
It won't grow soft,
Nor fade if forgotten
Worthless the Liṅga rite!
O Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama,
If you pour water on the Jaṅgama,
The Immovable one gets soft!"

Liṅga is not soaked even if you pour water upon it daily for the sake of abhiṣēka. Therefore, you should pour it upon the Jaṅgama, for this bath. If interpreted in a still wider sense, to find the Divine in the heart of mankind is true worship of Liṅga; Liṅga's worship attains fulfilment only when such a universal outlook is developed. The following vacana more truly expresses the same:

"If, knowing the root is the tree's mouth,
You water it below,

Lo, high up the sprouts appear !
If, knowing the Jaṅgama to be
The Liṅga's mouth, you serve him food,
He gives you a banquet in return !
If, seeing the Jaṅgama to be God,
You think him to be man,
Look, you will not escape hell,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

Such a synthesis of devotion for Liṅga as well as Jaṅgama is the unique characteristic of Basavanna. He maintained it without the slightest flaw even through the crowded activities of his political life. We find him thus growing more and more confirmed in his devotion to Liṅga and the Jaṅgama as days passed by. But occasionally he implores Kūḍala Saṅgama :

"Let them not deem me, Lord,
A votary of lust and sin ;
Let me be rather deemed, O Lord,
A Liṅga-drunken friend of the Jaṅgama ;"

again :

"Look, Liṅga, grant me the joy
Of seeing the Jaṅgama's face
As I worship Liṅga !
Come, give me the supreme bliss :
I beg of Thee this only gift,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

again :

"Melt my mind and purge its stains,
Test it and in fire refine !
Hammer, so the hammer pains,
To pure gold this heart of mine !
Beat from me, great Craftsman, beat
Anklets for Thy devotees' feet,
Save me, Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama !"

"O heart, remember not the sweet,
Like the monkey who has fed
On jaggery !
O heart, do not withdraw and fly,

Like the jackal who has fed
On sugarcane!
O heart, roam not about, adrift,
Like the raven who has soared
Up to the sky!
O heart, you who have met
Kūḍala Saṅga's Śaraṇas,
Trust them as you would Liṅga Itself."

Though we still notice in such vacanas the mind's tremor, we do not find the initial unhappy note of his questioning in despair, "Why did you give me birth to travail on this earth, a stranger unto Heaven?" Here the goal is set; the path is clear. If he prays to God in one vacana to make him an anklet for the devotees' feet, in another he exhorts his own mind to trust the Śaraṇas if he is to be an ornament to their feet. He himself finds out his onward path.

As a bee, once it finds a fragrant flower, stops its futile flitting, Basava's mind, after having once decided upon the aim and means of attainment, completely merged into it. With a firm and single-pointed faith his pursuit proceeded and his long-standing yearning found its fulfilment.

The profound flow of his divine love runs full-flooded as the deep sea. Unaware of any distinction between day and day, week and week, day and night, he forgets himself in the worship of Kūḍala Saṅgama. Listen how he joyously sings:

"Lord, I am a bee
In the lotus of Thy feet;
Lo, my tongue is sweet
With nectar of Thy name;
My eyes are all aflame
With the beauty of Thy face;
The very thought of Thee
Haunts all my nights and days;
My ears are filled, you see,
With the music of Thy praise."

He has now become a lute in God's hands to be played upon. Yet it is not enough for him:

"My legs tire not with dancing,
My eyes tire not with gazing,
My tongue tires not with singing :
What else, what else ?
Hark unto me, Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
What I'd love most to do
Is to burst Thy belly and enter it !"

Thus he wistfully longs to be Kūḍala Saṅgama Himself. His pursuit takes him there too :

"Through experiencing Thee, O Lord,
My body is undone ;
Through experiencing Thee, O Lord,
My mind has ceased to be ;
Through experiencing Thee, O Lord,
My Karma's broke to bits !
Thine own, instructing me at every step,
Have proved to me that thing we call
Devotion, is real :
That's so, Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

Through experiencing Kūḍala Saṅga he merged his own self into the universal Self and became co-extensive with the entire universe. Worshipping him, he shattered his wheel of births. Attaining to Him, he destroyed his rebirth. Absorbed in bhakti, he has now become the veritable embodiment of bhakti itself. Listen to his own words :

"What can I do ? it is my merit's fruit !
All efforts to propitiate become
A phantom suddenly ! And when I would
Make my devotions to Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama,
This beast Devotion pursued me, Lord,
And swallowed me !"

Thus he is swallowed by bhakti. After he attained *aruhu*, or the divine consciousness, through *kuruhu*, or the symbol, both had merged into one and consummated into the oneness of Liṅga-Aṅga. Bhakti, which commenced with love, has now become an embodiment of love itself. The following vacana has superbly depicted the height of his accomplishment ;

"Upon the soil of Piety
Sprouted Guru, the seed,
And Liṅga, the leaf, was born ;
Then Thought came for the flower,
And Deed for tender fruit,
And knowledge for the ripened one.
And when the fruit of knowledge broke
Loose from the stalk and fell,
Look, Kuḍala Saṅgama, wanting it Himself,
Gathered it up."

If the compelling ardour of Bhakti to burrow the loins of Kūḍala Saṅgama and penetrate it is seen on one side, here we notice that Kūḍala Saṅgama Himself has readily harboured that fruit in the core of His heart with the same love and eagerness. Basavanna's life has now ripened into a perfect fruit, full with luscious juice. That fruit was dedicated and offered to the feet of Kūḍala Saṅgama. He picked it as His own part and made room for it in His heart. We see here the height to which man can rise through spiritual discipline.

In accordance with the Veeraśaiva path, Basavanna's pursuit started with dvaita but found its fulfilment in advaita. This marks the essential difference between the way of the Dāsa tradition and the Śaraṇas' way. Dāsas were the followers of the dvaita school. Their bhakti begins with dvaita and ends in dvaita. They realise the divine vision of Hari in the form which conforms to their mode of bhakti. They enjoy that bliss, being different form Hari even in the end ; whereas the Śaraṇas themselves become the Bliss Itself or God Himself. In that ultimate state of the Śaraṇa there is neither bhakti nor bhakta; neither worshipper nor worshipped; the bhakta transcends all dichotomies and becomes the one. Notice how Basavanna sings of himself :

"As long as worship is, I sing of Liṅga ;
As long as action is, I sing of Jaṅgama ;
As long as there is tongue, I sing of Prasāda.
Since these three ceased to be,
Myself I sing, mark you,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

If bhakti takes the shape of a mere sentimental outburst, on several occasions it goes astray. Claiming one's own to be excellent, one is likely to sloop to slandering all other modes and forms. The initiate must cross this stage and reach the height of Parābhakti. The philosophic path of knowledge and the philanthropic way of action must supplement the ardour of bhakti. A flying bird always keeps its balance with the aid of its wings and tail, and moves. Even so, counsels Swami Vivekananda, an aspirant must soar high with the help of the wings of jñāna and bhakti and the tail of karmamārga. Thus he has proclaimed in a pithy way the synthesis of yōga. The Śaraṇas' way is a clear illustration of it. Several Śaraṇas have used this parable of the bird in enunciating the path of yōgic synthesis. For instance :

"The philosophers' word that
Work is all excellent
Pleases me not, O Lord.
Do you ask me why ?
As a bird soars to the sky
With her two wings,
Show me the Śaraṇas
Endowed with
Intuition within, and
Divine work and right
Knowledge without,
And save me, O Lord Akhaṇḍēśvara."

"Knowledge without work
Is of no use,
To say how it is :
A breath without body,
Has it a shelter, O Lord ?
Body without breath,
Has it energy, O Lord ?
Even so, knowledge without
Work has no shelter ;
Nor work without knowledge ;
Nor Liṅga without the light
Of work and knowledge.

'Knowledge and work are
Therefore, essntial,'
Said Mahāliṅga Guru Śiva Siddhēśvara Prabhu."

"What boots it
If you have knowledge
Unless you have right practice ?
Do you see a thing
By merely invoking it
Without working for it ?
The blind man canot see the path,
Nor can the lame walk.
One cannot be without the other.
Work without knowledge is gross,
Knowledge without work is hallucination.
Hence, both are essential,
Affirms Siddha Sōmanātha."

This is the synthesis of yōga attained by the Śaraṇas. Basavanna has demonstrated it in the path of his bhakti.

In Basavanna's pursuit of bhakti there is an emotional exuberance, a philosophical insight, a moving compassion that melts for the good of mankind. His devotion is not a mere sentimental outburst ; nor a useless bundle of dry and routine discussions of philosophical investigation and hair-splitting. But it is animated by the vision of the mystic experience that knows no limits. In runs as a deep river with necessary restraint and dignity towards a determined goal, having matured and purified the emotions in the light of the sparkling intellect. As the river joins the sea and becomes the sea itself, his bhakti's current merges with and becomes Kūḍala Saṅgama Himself. Like 'a stave hid in fire,' light in the great light, silence in sound, his life melts into the Great Silence :

"There's neither word nor speech ;
Why, then, this rage ?
Do you not know, good Sir,
That should you speak, your Karma grows ?
Unless speech is foiled
One cannot be oneself . . ,

O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
An awful load of births must be
Through words !"

Thus Basavanna describes the state of the Ultimate Silence. Or, in other words, the very speech becomes silence there. The silence that transcends speech is its true description. Nonetheless, we notice here the daring attempt to compress in words the sublimity of that state which is beyond the reach of all words :

"I was greater than the greatest that there is
In the grand Absolute, sublimely great.
How can I tell the way the word
That I'm within the lofty light
Of Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Was turned to silentness ?"

"Look at the being that remains
When all the murky darkness is dispelled !
While light on light has been enthroned,
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama alone knows
The union that ensues
When light is wedded unto light !"

Light becomes a throne to light. Light mingles with light. As Prabhu puts it, that which remains in the end is nothing but Light.

Akka Mahadevi :

Like Basavanna's, Sister Mahadevi's too is the path of devotion. Not yielding to the luxuries of royal splendour or to the lures of beauty and youth, she dedicated all her love at the feet of Cennamallikarjuna. Transcending the desire of espousing a worldly husband, her love chose to follow the spiritual path so she might be the loving queen of the Lord of the Universe :

"O Sir, I love the beautiful one,
The formless one, who is beyond
Or death or dissolution ;
The Beautiful one,
The fearless, dauntless one,
Who is past birth . . .

Cenna Mallikārjuna is my groom :
All other husbands in the world
Are naught to me !"

Such daring had naturally grown in her. Such a fearless soul was not meant to be caught up in the royal palace of Kausika. Hence she broke the regal fetters and darted out.

The prime of blooming youth, a beauty that could imprison the heart of Kausika and make him a loyal servitor, wealth at her service even without her asking for it—though she was in the midst of all such charms and lures, her mind, not relishing any of these baits, took to quick renunciation and ardently prayed to God to tear all such bonds :

"Lord, break my Māyā's pride ;
Dispel my body's darkness, put to rout
The encumbrances of my soul.
O Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord,
Deliver me from worldly circumstance
That wraps me round and round, I pray !"

As we noticed in Basavanna, in Akka Mahadevi too we find the initial anguish and an afflicted heart :

"This world plagues me
By chasing me relentlessly :
What shall I do, O Lord, what shall I do
To this vexation of each day ?
I have not strength to bear
The burden of this burning flesh !
O Mallikārjuna Lord,
Slay me or spare me, it's Thy will !"

"Even as an elephant
That, breaking from the herd, goes all alone,
And yet remembers his mountain home,
So I remember them.
As a caged parrot thinks
Of his own kith and kin,
So I remember them.
O Cenna Mallikārjuna, call out to me,

Saying, 'Come here, my child', and show
Thy comeliness unto me !"

"What is called world, O Father, is my foe; it comes unfailingly in search of me! It seeks me, seizes me and slays! Like a monkey at the top of a pole, I played as Thou did'st make me play." Continuing in the same strain, she reveals herself:

"In flameless fire I burnt
And suffered pain without a wound;
I laboured without hope of meed; because
I am beloved of Lord Cenna Mallikārjuna,
Through undesired births I come
And come again !"

She prays to Him to put an end to this endless distress and make her "bear Thee, O My Lord Cenna Mallikārjuna, out of Thy mercy."

The might of Māyā, with which she pinions the seekers at the initial stage of their pursuit, and their troubled anguish to break the bondage and march ahead—these are graphically painted in Akka Mahadevi's vacanas:

"Like to the silkworm who secretes his house
And wrapping himself with his own thread
Meets with his death, so I
Am dying with desire
Of whatsoever comes to mind.
O Lord, be kind to me today,
And, banishing all ill desires
Clean from my mind, show me the way
To Thee, Cenna Mallikārjuna !"

" It is as if a poor man's life is gone
The while the rich man's granary is shut.
Tell me, O Father, is this my lot
The while Thou put'st me to the test
By thus tormenting me? It is as if
The chaff is blown away
The while one fans and piles the grain:
Which manner dost Thou bless me, Lord
Cenna Mallikārjuna?

She grieves thus and asks how long she should wait for His mercy. Again she describes the might of Māyā, but affirms that she will not fear His Māyā, and surrenders herself to Him, her Lord :

"Māyā, as shadow, taunts my body,
And taunts my breath as mind ;
As memory, she taunts the mind,
As consciousness, the memory ;
She taunts the universal mass
By brandishing her whip. . .
O Cenna Mallikārjuna, none can escape
The net of Māyā cast by Thee !"

"To an ascetic, Māyā takes the shape
Of a female ascetic ; to a monk
She is a nun ; a man
To a woman, a woman to a man.
O Cenna Mallikārjuna, I am not one
To fear this Māyā of Thine !"

Sati-pati bhakti, or devotion to God as Lord by the devotee as wife, is a peculiar mode of devotion, as seen before, in the seeker's pursuit of bhakti. And it is natural for a woman to love God as the lord of her heart and surrender to Him with undivided loyalty and sweet affection. That is why we find that women aspirants mostly resort to this mode of bhakti. Even so, Akka Mahadevi bracketed all the so-called worldly husbands as only fit for being confined to the flames, and focussed all her love upon Cenna Mallikārjuna. She never yielded her mind or heart to the calls of physical love, at the ordinary level pertaining to a common man or woman. The following vacana vividly reveals this facet of her matchless mind :

"Through joys of Liṅga I achieved
The body's defeat ;
By way of knowledge I achieved
Defeat of mind ;
Through God-experience I achieved
Defeat of soul ;
Donning the Light as garment, I subdued

The darkness of the senses.
Look at the ashmark I have worn
When Kāma burnt who shows himself to you
Within the outer gloss of youth!
If Cenna Mallikārjuna
After slaying Kāma let him live
As the heart-born, I erased
The writing on the heart-born's head!"

The last statement deserves our special notice here. Manmatha, or the god of love, who rises in everybody's heart, is never born in her heart at all. She never fell into the traps of Kāma, but ever yearned for the grace of God and sang His praises. Her vacanas are spontaneous outpourings of Divine love, thrilling rhapsodies, sweet and lovely lyrics.

Intensely yearning for Cenna Mallikārjuna, her heart sways towards Him. He has completely captured her heart:

"He's bought and made my heart his own,
O mother; ravished my body, made my joy
Worthy of him; he has possessed
My entire being: I am now
The beloved of Cenna Mallikārjuna."

"The peacock strutting on the mountain-tops—
Does it do so on grassy knolls instead?
The swan that frolicks on the lake—
Does it do so in a wee brook instead?
A cuckoo—does it sing unless the fronds
Break forth upon the mango-tree?
Is a bumble-bee drawn to a flower
That blows without a scent?
Is my heart drawn to anyone else
Than Cenna Mallikārjuna?—
Hearken to me, O cronies mine!"

Thus, always harping upon Him, she kicks away all the so-called pleasures of the world. She prays to all lovely things in Nature to show her her Lord:

"O swarms of bees, O mango-tree,
O cuckoo and the light of moon,

One thing I beg of all of you :
If you catch sight
Of my Lord Cenna Mallikārjuna,
Call out to Him and let me see !"

And in every phenomenon of Nature she finds His presence and passionately longs to be one with Him :

"O parrots, prattling your shrill patter,
You have not seen Him, or have you ?
O cuckoos, lifting up your voices,
You have not seen Him, or have you ?
O bees that dart and play around,
You have not seen Him, or have you ?
O swans that frolic on the lakes,
You have not seen Him, or have you ?
O peacocks, sporting over hills and dales,
You have not seen Him, or have you ?
Tell me, o tell me where He is—
My Cenna Mallikārjuna ?"

Hers is a firm resolve to seek and join Him, unmindful of honour and shame. She knows very well that He is not one to be easily won. "The devotion that stands not steadfast to the end and stewardship without resolve, Śiva does not love." She also knows how He recedes if one stoops to be servile or mean.

"Should I feel hungry, there be alms ;
Should I feel thirsty, well, there be
Tanks, streams and wells ;
Ruins of temples for my sleep ;
And if I want companionship,
Why, Thou art there,
O Cenna Mallikārjuṇa Lord !"

This speaks of her determined faith. For Him she is prepared to undergo any pain or misery and make it an object of serenity and space :

"You cut and saw and rub the sandalwood :
Does it, being hurt, refuse its scent ?
You cut and rub a piece of gold :

Does it, being heated, take in dross ?
You cut a sugercane joint by joint,
Put it and squeeze it in a press ;
When heated, it gives sugar and jaggery :
Does it, being hurt, refuse its sweet ?
When you collect my bygone sins
And cast them in my face,
Is it a loss for you ?....
O Father Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord,
Though you may slay me
I'll never cease
To love the hand that slays !"

With all her trials and travails, she offers nothing but love to the Lord. She challenges Him to tease and test her. But she is not one to be cowed down. She shall not fail to bow even if she is killed :

"Do not tease me, saying
I am an orphaned one, do not !
Whatever Thou mayst do, I'm not afraid,
I live on sapless leaves, and sleep
Upon a sword.
O Cenna Mallikārjuna, if Thou
Wouldst put me to a severe test,
I place my soul and body in Thy hands
And I am pure."

"If spark has kindled spark,
I say it quenched my hunger and thirst.
If a cloud comes tearing down,
I say it's water pouring for my bath.
Should a mountain fall on me,
I say it's flowers showering down.
Should my head break and drop,
I say my life is offered unto Thee,
O Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord !"

She invites Him to pour upon her an endless series of perils and smash her sense of 'I' and 'mine' :

"Lord, make me beg from door to door,
Not missing one, with hand outstretched;
Lord, make that, when I beg,
No alms is given; and if it should,
Let it drop to the ground;
And ere I pick up what has dropped,
Let a dog pick it up,
O Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord!"

She implores Him to burn her in the crucible of travails and purge her mind of the stain of sin, strike her a thousand strokes and chisel her into a handsome image and pour upon her His bountiful grace. Thus her cry of naisthika-bhakti runs to Him.

On her way to Kalyana she had to face perils and ordeals at every step. Besides, wherever she went, the dazzling beauty of her person plagued her, as her enemy as it were. Thoughtless people, it is quite likely, were unable to realise that she was an uncommon soul so far unknown to the world; must have censured and slandered her. That was why Allama Prabhu deliberately subjected her to searching tests in the Anubhava Maṇṭapa, to exhibit to the world her fortitude, her inner strength, and that her uncommon venture to swim against the ways of the world were spontaneous with her. That event in the Anubhava Maṇṭapa is perhaps unparalleled.

Sister Mahadevi was thrilled by the very thought of meeting Basavanna and other Śaraṇas. She was looking forward to it since long. Her long-standing desire had now been fulfilled, and her joy knew no bounds. In the mood of such a soaring joy she enters the Anubhava Maṇṭapa, or the Religio-Mystic Academy, and exclaiming "I am saved having found the holy feet of Saṅgana Basavanna" pays homage to all the Śaraṇas assembled there. Basavanna was perhaps most impatient to receive her in their midst. But Allama Prabhu, the renunciation-incarnate, who is the President of the institution, decides for himself to test her and exhibit her eminence to the world. Hence he does not give a chance to Basavanna to welcome her at once:

"Why come you hither, pray,
O woman in the budding bloom of youth?

At the word woman our Śaraṇas
See red ! If you can tell
Your husband's identity, come sit ;
Else, pray, be gone !
If you desire the joy
Of our Śaraṇa's fellowship,
Tell who your husband be,
O Mother ! "

he so curtly questions her. All the Śaraṇas are looking at the situation so intently that the entire body of each has turned into eyes as it were.

But she is not daunted by these words of Prabhu. She boldly opens her heart, as it were, and reveals the identity of her Lord :

"Hara, for endless time have I
Made penance, so you might
Become my wedded lord !
When word was sent to learn
Of matter for the bridal seat,
Mine own sent me to Him
Who holds the Moon :
Smeared ash upon my brow,
And tied the bracelet to my wrist,
So I might be
Cenna Mallikarjuna's own."

" Thus I have eschewed altogether my corporal consciousness and absolutely surrendered myself to Him. What if the body becomes black ? What if the body shines bright ? I am not fond of the body "—asserts Sister Mahadevi.

But Allama is not one who is easily convinced. His next question is a formidable one.

" You say that you love God without God loving you,
What does it mean :
If you are really pure,
Why do you cloak yourself with your hair shedding
your dress ?
The shame that lurks within your heart
Thus shows itself outside : it will not please
Guhēśvaraliṅga ! "

This question nonplussed her for a moment. But she needed not to grope for an answer. For her renunciation was not a momentary and sentimental act, but a resolve confirmed through the conviction of her deep consciousness. Hence she replies :

"Unless the fruit is ripe within,
The outer peel will never lose
Its gloss . . . I covered myself
Lest sight of seats of love
Should do you hurt.
Is any harm in this ?
Pray, do not tease me, who loves
Cenna Mallikarjuna, god of gods."

Really, it is a penetrating answer. She frankly declares that the veil of hair is not meant for herself but for others. Because the fruit cannot change its hue unless it is ripe.

The whole congregation of Śaraṇas is immensely pleased with that answer. Allama too is delighted in his heart. He is now fully convinced of her resolute faith and intense renunciation. But he intends to probe her heart deeper still and reveal the nature of her consciousness matured within. Following the trend of her own words, he asks :

"You love god and God loves you—
I do not see the point.
Whenever the peel has lost its gloss,
It means the juice within the fruit
Has turned to rot :
Such business does not please
Guhēśvara !"

Therefore, how can she justify her stand ?

She answers, "It is not a fruit that goes rot. It may do so in so far as it yields to passions like lust, anger, greed, etc. The juice akin to saccidānanda transcends all these and hence cannot rot. Unburdening the corporal burden, I am now, like a burnt twine, though bodied, bodiless. I am now the wife of Lord Cenna Mallikārjuna and have been absorbed into Him."

"Does the corpse cry out it is dead ?
Or does the hidden hoard call out ?

Is curdled milk still sweet ?
This kind of talk will never please
Guhēśvara !"

Thus, through metaphor piled upon metaphor, he attempts to catch her in a dilemma.

Prabhu had to face the same sort of question by Muktāyi in the past :

"If one can forget
The knowldge grasped,
One should be dumb
Like my Ajaganna—
For the traffic of words
Goes with lack
Of self-possession,
O Prabhu !"

Allama now poses the same question before Mahadevi. But the context is different. Allama had then gone to rescue or redeem Muktāyi, whereas Mahadevi has now come to be redeemed by Prabhu. She has not as yet attained the perfect oneness that Prabhu had then accomplished. But as a result of her family inheritance, she had occasional glimpses of the Divine. The nature of her answer differed from that which Prabhu gave on that occasion. She answers :

"A body that is dead awakes
When, having dreamed in an oblivious state,
It tells its dream. The hoard
Rises to call to him whose due it is.
The curdled milk, hardened to ghee,
Grows sweet again.
Why seek a fault herein,
O brothers of Cenna Mallikrājuna,
God of gods ?

She thereby suggests that the Divine experience has been still a dream to her, and hence she implores him to make it a fulfilment. Prabhu is now pleased by her wise answer. He steps down from the Śūnya Siṁhāsana and welcomes her with due honour and high esteem :

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"Shedding her corporal traits,
She has become
United with Liṅga;
Shedding her mental traits
She has become
United with Consciousness;
Shedding the attributes of her will,
She has become
Herself the Supreme Light.
I say hail to the State
Of Mahādeviyakka, who has,
Shedding the sense of self and other,
Become one with the Liṅga Itself,
In Guhēśvaraliṅga."

To such glory of hers who has won the esteem of Prabhu all the Śaraṇas bowed in homage and acclaimed her victory with cheers.

Staying there for some time in their midst, she participated in their mystic discourses and got spiritual training at their hands. Their fellowship pushed her on the path of progress:

"Look, in the ocean of this world I fell!
Guru has taught me that this world
Is worthless; checking my body's vagaries,
He set the Liṅga on my body; he,
My father, cleansed me of my bygone births;
And, pointing out the path ahead,
Made clear to me the truth
About Cenna Mallikārjuna."

"O Guru who, erasing mortal birth,
Hast made my life divine,
O Guru who untying the bonds of birth,
Hast shown to me the supreme Bliss;
O Guru who, effacing every trace
That clings to worldliness, hast
Made me reputed as a devotee;
O Guru who hast brought and placed
Cenna Mallikārjuna in my hands:
I bow to Thee!"

Like 'a river rushing to a dried-up tank, or rain pouring upon a withered plant,' the Śaraṇas' fellowship soon brought perfection to the spirit of Mahadevi. Listen how she sings with joy :

"Seeing Basavanna's feet,
My body has become as naught ;
Seeing Cenna Basavanna's feet,
My life, too, has become void ;
O Prabhu, bowing to your holy feet,
My consciousness was rendered firm.
O Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord,
Now that I've earned
The mercy of Thy Śaraṇas,
There's nothing more I want,
O Prabhu !"

Thus the penance she had undergone for aeons infinite that she might wed herself to God, attained fulfilment. All the Śaraṇas married her to Lord Cenna Mallikārjuna. But what type of marriage is it ? What are the bride's ornaments ?

"Prayer is as a bath to me ;
The sacred ash, the fadeless turmeric ;
My naked state, a splendid robe ;
The dust from Śiva's feet,
My aids to beauty ; beads of Rudrakshi,
My clothes ; the Śaraṇa's feet,
The tassels on my chaplet crown ;
Cenna Mallikārjuna is my Lord,
And I his bride.
Tell me, my dear, why should I have
Any other of ornament ? "

Thus, with such ornaments and decorations, her marriage with Cenna Mallikārjuna was celebrated. At that wedding—

"It was the guru that gave me in marriage,
Liṅga was the bridegroom, I the bride ;
May all the worlds know it !
All the devotees of the world
Were the guests at the marriage
Made up the wedding company.

They found for me a fitting groom
And gave me away :
Hence Cenna Mallikārjuna is my lord.
No other husband in the world
Are aught to me ! "

Listen to the description of the wedding :

" Setting a canopy of fire
Over an altar made of water,
Spreading a hailstone carpet,
He came and wedded
A headless bridegroom to a legless bride.
They gave me to a life
Never to be shaken off !
They married me to a groom
Named Cenna Mallikārjuna."

The vacana is crammed with spiritual meaning. They lay a ceiling of knowledge on the altar of mind which is as fickle as water. The Guru's look of grace is spread as a carpet. For the bride, the Śaraṇa, who is free from all worldly ways of living, the Liṅga who transcends all earthly bonds, was the groom. It is thus a wedding between God and his devotee ; hence it is an eternal alliance—says Mahadevi.

When we carefully reflect over these words, we can understand the height of her conception of marriage. Not even a ray of worldly pleasure or its desire is found in her sati-pati bhakti. When the spirit of wife and lord soars higher than the limits of worldly relationship, it is esteemed as true devotion. We notice the supreme height of such bhakti in her words.

When such a Śaraṇa, the wife, reaches the ultimate height of Divine experience, she herself becomes the husband, God. Here sati and pati, or wife and husband, are not different but one. She, meditating upon Him, has attained to a stage which transcends the meditation itself :

"After my body became
Thyself, whom could I serve ?
After my mind became
Thyself, whom could I invoke ?

After my breath became
Thyself, whom could I worship, pray?
After my consciousness was lost in Thee,
Whom could I know?
Being Thyself in Thee,
O Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord,
Through Thee have I forgotten Thee !"

Thus, her pursuit is consummated in the consubstantial union of Liṅga and Aṅga. Knowing the Limitless, she has transcended the limits :

"Within the Guru's holy palm I had my birth ;
I grew up in the grace
Of innumerable persons ;
Behold, they fed me on
The milk of love, on wisdom's ghee,
On the sugar of ultimate Bliss !
On these three kinds of nectar they nurtured me
To surfeiting . . . .
My marriage you performed :
Gave me a worthy groom ; and you,
The innumerable holy ones, came out in crowds
To send me to my husband's house . . .
I will act in that house so as to please
Basavanna ; with hands knit
To Cenna Mallikārjuna's, I bring
Flowers for your heads, but, listen, pray ;
Never will I bring disgrace to you ;
Do me the grace of going back :
Hail, hail ! I bow to you !"

With this sacred pledge, she proceeds to Śrīśailaṁ. Her further pursuit ends in yielding flowers for the Śaraṇas' crowns.

"Treading down the root of the Moolādhara
I climbed to the Bhooṁaṅdak ;
With the aid of the root of Adhara,
And climbing renunciation's stairs I have reached
The Sri Parvata ; lift me by the hand,
Cenna Mallikārjuna !

She becomes one with Cenna Mallikārjuna to be one with Him.

Prabhudeva

It has not been possible to trace from the vacanas available so far, the several stages of Prabhu's spiritual pursuit. The correct account of the agitation of his mind and his struggle as a seeker cannot be gathered from his vacanas. All of a sudden he appears as an accomplished seer. That is why, perhaps, Cāmarasa and other writers of Purāṇas must have conceived of him as one who was perfect since birth and descended directly from Śiva.

Prabhu's way of spiritual pursuit is dominated by knowledge. He is one who, embracing a radical mode of asceticism and renunciation, tore off the noose of Māyā which obstructed his pursuit and triumphantly marched ahead. He remonstrates:

"What need that they should burn
Who burn already with the pangs
Of separation from Guhēśvara?
You foolish God of Love!"

We see here Prabhu's courage in defying the God of Love who had come to shoot his arrows at him. Māyā, or the cosmic illusion, was not able to restrain the growth and development of his radiant spirit:

"Not thine the earth, not thine the gold,
Not thine the woman you love:
That's only the curse
The world is heir to . . .
The gem of Knowledge is what you own.
Do wear that gem, undimmed,
As ornament, and none
Except thee shall be rich,
O Mind!"

Thus counselling his own mind, he embarks on the quest of that gem of knowledge.

He met Animiṣa as if "in a temple hidden in the earth he had seen a Gem." He discovered the goal of his going in that Guru who was endowed with "substance invisible, dazzling lustre, glory incomparable." He sings with joy:

"With a seeker's tireless steps I have come
And seen the Inconceivable,

And beheld the sweep of my consciousness !
My whole being, within and without,
Bathed in supernal splendour,
I have gazed at the Source of all light,
I have seen my Supreme Master
With his gaze of unfathomable wonder
Concentrate upon the emblem of his palm."

The Liṅga on the Guru's palm shifted to his hand. The Guru transmitted his infinite grace, which transcended the reach of words on words, through a mere wish, and lodged it in Prabhu's heart. Allama absorbed the perfect Void of that Silence which dwelt in his Guru's muteness. Being pleased that his divine power had now attained fulfilment, Animiṣa became one with the Infinite. Then Prabhu realised that "the spirit of the Guru was hidden in the Liṅga, and that Liṅga had come to his own palm. Therefore, this glorious Guru had established himself completely in his (Prabhu's) palm and heart" ; and so consoling himself, came out as a perfect accomplished one.

Allama's life's purpose was now accomplished. He, who was seeking the Guru, himself became the Guru, the disciple, as well as the Liṅga that harboured the two. In his joyous expression :

"All memory is dead ;
All error burnt ;
Awareness is forgot ;
All symbols have crumbled !
Where is now Motion or Mind ?
No motion, for the body is naught ;
No Mind, for it's lost in the Liṅga ;
And gone, gone too,
O Guhēśvara,
All that come between
The eyes and light !"

He has described his own attainment. He has searched the ultimate perfection which is beyond all dichotomies, beyond all thought and speech, and unfathomable beyond measure. To him,

"Acceptance is His journey,
And halting is His sojourn;"

and

"To Him who has set up his quiet throne
In the hermitage of tranquillity,
Brought the water of the Invisible
From the well of celestial depths
And poured upon the Infinite Prāṇaliṅga,"

the cosmic worship in the Infinite Light became his daily worship. Prabhu had thus become

"The Supreme Lord
Whose gait is without feet,
Whose touch is without hands,
Whose taste is without tongue,
Who begs, with a bowl of love,
For the Supreme !

But the world had to have that wealth of his mystic experience. Allama took upon himself the responsibility of broadcasting that experience. He also possessed a heart so tender and compassionate that he voluntarily went round seeking the seekers and willingly offered them his guidance. Besides, some other obscure call seems ever to have been impelling him. Allama knew that Basavanna, who was the Dandadhikari of Bijjala and a treasure of devotion, had ventured to bring about a revolution in the realm of religion. The call of Basavanna's bhakti touched Prabhu's heart. He turned his steps towards Kalyāṇa to give the support of his knowledge and renunciation to Basavanna's work of redeeming the world. Several seekers then got the grace of his guidance and attained to perfection. Let us first refer to a few memorable occasions which vividly illustrate the glory of his divine experience, and then proceed to Kalyāṇa and look at him seated on the Śūnya Simhāsana as the president of the Religio-mystic Academy started by Basavanna.

To begin with, let us study the occasion of his meeting Muktāyi Akka. She was also a great seer and had gone far ahead on the path of liberation. Her own brother Ajaganṇa was her spiritual Guru. She was engaged in her spiritual pur-

suits under the guidance of her Gūru's grace. When things were thus going on, her brother met with an accident and suddenly died. Being shocked by this bereavement, she was mourning incessantly and inconsolably, when Prabhu arrives.

Muktāyiakka mourns, but how ! She does not mourn for her brother like an ordinary woman for mere blood-relationship and worldly kinship. Her grief is that of an aspirant who has lost her Guru in the midst of her spiritual pursuit. She grieves that she failed to realise the ultimate form of knowledge when he lived. Listen to her own words :

"How, brother, how can I survive ?
I have now become as one
Who blinks between light and dark.
O Ajagaṇṇa, your love
Has first blindfolded my eyes,
And then shown me the glass !"

Just then Allama arrives and asks :

"O tell me who you are
Who lean upon your palm
Your sad dishevelled head
And thread the pearls of tears ?"

Muktāyi replies :

"If you would know my name,
What answer shall I find ?
This body of flesh means naught to me
Nor is there any nonsense in my mind.
And if you ask me—no name !
What witless fool am I,
Owning no father or mother ;
Younger sister I am
To Ajagaṇṇa, who
His mortal intellect has forgone,
To be a shining Light
Beyond all bound."

Prabhu pays homage to Ajagaṇṇa :

"I hail Thy devotee, Ajagaṇṇa,
O Guhēśvara,
And I am saved !"

Muktāyi, astonished to hear such a tribute, asks in return :

"Tell me who you are who hail,
Who know Ajaganṇa, my brother !
Him who has become one
With the ultimate Reality."

Thereto Allama gives an enigmatic reply pregnant with meaning :

"All hail to thee, O Mother !
Before the earth and heavens were,
Before the waters flowed,
Before the fire began to burn
Or winds began to blow,
My mother was born.
And long before that time
Birthless my father grew :
Out of their loins I came.
Five sisters have I had ;
Who, having lost their home.
Have wed themselves to me.
No cupid's arrow hit me
When to their flesh I knit me.
Your brother-in-law Allayya am I
And you my sister-in-law."

He suggests that he is the son born of the Primordial Conscious Force and Śiva who birthless grew long before, that the five elements are his sisters, and that he has lived with them untainted by them, as though he has not lived with them at all. This is his height. Muktāyi bends in reverence to his unparalleled majesty. Still, she has not been able to overcome her grief for her bereavement. She grieves, "How can I smother the memory of my brother Ajaganṇa ? Who shall reveal me the truth ?"

Allama replies, consoling her : "You look within and realise yourself. For one who knows the mystery of Liṅga there is nothing like difference. Liṅga is not far. None else could show you the Ultimate. You should yourself know your Self." Sister Muktāyi submits:

"Without the Master's word
Liṅga cannot be known.
Without the Master's word
Jaṅgama cannot be known.
Without the Master's word
Prasāda cannot be known.
Without the Master's word
Yourself you cannot know."

Prabhu gives a handsome reply :

"There's neither far nor near
Between Master and disciple!
It is the Master's sport
To be disciple, and his
To be, in turn, the Master.
Maybe there is this split
Between Master and disciple,
Because this deceiver Karma
Has entered the heart.
If you say you have become
The self-effulgent light
At sight of the Absolute
Who was ere ever was
The created and increate,
Yea, farther back, then you
Are master of yourself.
Why, could there be a master
Superior to yourself.
Is there a need to tell
That Guhēśvaraliṅga
Is none else but yourself?"

To Muktāyi, uncommon seeker as she was, his plea sounds like a show of words. Hence she replies : "If you say that you have become Parabrahma by realising yourself, you should be silence-bound like Ajaganna. For the traffic of words goes with lack of self-possession."

Prabhu, astonished to hear those words, replies :

"The word they speak
Is the Effulgent Liṅga ;

The sound they make
Is the Supreme Law.
When palate and lips
Conspire in the mouth,
You have that which transcends
Nāda, bindu and kaḷā.
Listen, O fool!
Guhēśvara's devotees,
Even though they speak,
Are immaculate!"

But Muktāyi is not one to be thus silenced. Hence she taunts him: "You are only uttering these words just to score a point. You do not have the true wisdom yet; get away!"

Allama, pleased with her frank audacity, opens his heart:

"If you know yourself, all speech is
The Supreme Truth!
If you forget yourself, all speech is
Only a lie!
To have known and forgotten, makes
The Śivayōgi's words
A spiritual discourse.
If I inquire, so that I make you aware of
The state of your mind,
My mind has neither spot nor stain!
Because you are Guhēśvaraliṅga's
Favoured child,
I opened my mouth:
Did I not? Speak, you fool!"

He then makes her know the nature of his mystic experience:

"Whatever is done
By the body of one
Who is one with Liṅga—
That, having destroyed
All difference
Of formless and form,
Abides in the Self—
Is Liṅga's work.

Whatever is gained
Of mystic sense
By one who's attained
Cessation of mind
And oneness with Liṅga
Declares in a word
That knowledge is lost.
For the Śivayogi who has drowned
Himself in himself
All sense's undone
Of Twain, and one!
Let Guhēśvaraliṅga
Be witness thereof!"

Muktāyi's inward eye now opens. She finds in him the Guru that she longed to find in Ajaganna. Thus lending perfection to her yogic pursuit, Allama wanders on.

This event brings the height of Prabhu's mystic awareness into bold relief. It may appear to be vague to the physical eye. This is inevitable. The words uttered at the peak of mystic experience may not be clear to one demanding the satisfaction of mere intellect. The intellect gets puzzled without being able to find out the true meaning of those words. But, at that stage, one had better attempt to make out the significance of that path with faith than question the veracity of the experience. For faith is the very foundation of mystic experience. Faith is not blind belief: it is the heart's venture to experience that which mere intellect is unable to understand. As one progresses in that faith, the import and meaning of these words become clearer. From this point of view alone we should weigh the observations to follow.

If we notice one aspect of Prabhu's mystic way in the Muktāyi episode, we see another aspect of it in the Siddharāma episode. The Śivayogi is possessed of Liṅga in every cell of his body, is not bound though embodied, nor susceptible to infection of any kind, and has attained the transcendental state through his own divine consciousness. Hence he is capable of extirpating the sense of difference between Guru and disciple. The Muktāyi episode reveals that Prabhu is such a Śivayogi.

But Siddharāma was also following the path of Śivayoga and distributing the fruits of his Karmayoga to the people. With a living faith in form, loving compassion for all creatures of the world, he had believed that he was himself the Parabrahma.[1] With such a faith he was building temples and towers, digging tanks and canals, running alms-sheds and water-sheds, and was thus engaged in all sorts of philanthropic work. Prabhu comes to Siddharāma when he is busy with such activities at Sonnalige.

This is a unique episode. It is as an ocean running to a sea as it were. Siddharāma is not just an ordinary Sādhaka.

He had kept before his mind's eye a great ideal: 'The Śivayogi's body should not wear out in vain, must be busy with as many works as possible.'[2] This ideal of Siddharāma's is no doubt a lofty ideal. But Allama had to come to him to suggest that this was not the ultimate ideal and, by setting him on the right path of Śivayoga, to supply his one shortcoming.

Just as he arrives, Prabhu deliberately ridicules Siddharāma, asking his disciples to call their mason Rāma. Presently, Siddharāma understands Prabhu's eminence. But, having a firm faith in his own philanthropy, he defends it; at the same time, he evinces modesty by saying, "Since all I do is subject to thy will, I have no freedom apart from Thee."

Allama, being now pleased with his modesty, rejoices that Siddharāma is highly advanced in yoga. But he regrets that his yogic attainment is still incomplete:

"When the body itself is the temple of God,
Why ask for a temple else?
When the breath itself has become the Liṅga,
Why ask for a Liṅga else?
It is not for lips to tell,
It is not for ears to hear.
O Guhēśvara, if you should turn
Into a stone,
What should I be?"

---

1. Rāghavāṅka, *Siddharāma Carite*
2. ibid.

He further points out :

"That you have found Guhēśvaraliṅga
Your words alone tell me,
O Siddharāmayya, not your deeds !"

He cautions :

"Temples and tanks are footprints of the past !
Rituals and rites cannot escape rebirth.
Do you, Siddharāmayya, shatter the shackles
Of yesterday and morrow, and bind you fast
To Guhēśvaraliṅga."

But Siddharāma is not one to yield so soon. He pleads in return :

"Unless you grow the food you eat,
How can your hunger be appeased ?"

Thus he asserts the necessity of work.

Allama already knows this. He urges that the yogi should not merely master his work but transcend it :

"When doing is deemed as dear as life,
How is the Light to be purely known ?
If all your life is spent on drill,
Where is the time to join a fight ?
O Siddharamayya,
If you would know Guhēśvaraliṅga
Abjure the knowledge of the world,
Make fast the moorings of your Faith,
And let your body be refined
As rice-grains that have lost their chaff."

Hence he counsels : By all means you may do Karma. But it should not become a bondage, but a willing means of liberation not worldly but heavenly. Its fruit should not be short-lived but enduring. You may perform such works. You are building a tank. That is also good. But it is not enough. One need not become a Śivayogi to build such a tank. There is another type of tank which the Śivayogi alone can build. I have built such a tank. Look :

"I see none at all
Who can build a tank
With the body as bank,

Buttress it with mind,
With virtue for steps ;
And fill it all full
With water of Bliss.
Before you I declare,
Guhēśvara,
Forever shall stand
The tank I have built."

This is the tank which shall not dry up even if the whole world drains it. Prabhu advises Siddharāmayya to build such an enduring tank.

Rāghavāṅka, the poet, who had thoroughly mastered Prabhu's vacanas, while depicting this very incident, has made Prabhu give a highly significant precept to Siddharāmayya : "Cast away the stark madness that you are not, though you are". You have vainly believed that you are shortlived and that today you are and tomorrow no more. Therefore you yearn to do the highest good to mankind within the period you are destined to live. But you are not one to live today and die tomorrow. You are everlasting. Therefore, let your Karma-yoga be raised to the height of eternal work—thus he cautions him. The same caution is echoed in his vacana here:

"If you can rub the gold, can you its hue ?
If you can wear the flower, can you its scent ?
Can you, by doing, realise the thing ?
Can you, by litanies to Guhēśvara,
Attain to oneness with the Absolute ?"

Let, gold having perished, its hue alone remain; let, the flower having perished, its scent alone remain. The bondage having been broken, let its abiding fruit remain. He advises him to perform such Karmas, or works. Then only shall the spirit of difference wherein you meditate upon Guhēśvara be gone and you yourself become himself ?

The spark of Prabhu's word touches Siddharama's heart. He looks within and searches his heart. He weighs the worth of the Karmas he had so far performed and resolves to go beyond all these. Allama assists him in this venture and proceeds with him to Kalyāṇa.

Prabhu's arrival at Kalyāṇa served as a force to supplement Basava's bhakti as it were. His presence in the midst of the Śaraṇas gave life and vigour to their discourses. In the field of his many-sided activities, Basavanna had need of a seer like Prabhu, who was a living incarnation of knowledge, renunciation and asceticism; who was able to despise and destroy all that is mean, and uphold truth and justice. Basava's was a child-like heart. Many a time he was so innocent as to believe that all that is white is milk, and humble enough to declare :

"I bow to robes worn by the Jaṅgamas—it's thine
To look into the heart !"

There was no dearth of pseudo-jangamas who were shrewd enough to take undue advantage of his simplicity, his credulousness and his spirit of unreserved surrender to Guru, Liṅga and Jaṅgama. But in Prabhu's presence such impostors could not carry on, and all their trickery and fraud was of no avail. Prabhu was not one to tolerate anything that is mean, hence he breathed fire against all such hypocrites :

"If a ghost possesses the worldly people,
They speak to its pleasure.
Why should the robed one, donning the garb,
Be eaten up with greed ?
O Guheśvara, what shall I say
O those who wear the elephant hide
And bark as dogs ?"

He insists that we should not talk with such impostors even once in a thousand times, once in a million times. His remarks against sham Jaṅgamas who come for food in Basavanna's Great House are ruthlessly sharp :

"The slaves of flesh all—
They gather for belly's sake
But speak of Liṅga
They speak as slaves to care
Oh ye, who talk as you
Please, where is Guhēśvaraliṅga
For you ?"

He does not approve of any ostentatious rites and rituals, vows

and practices undertaken for pomp and show, just to throw dust in the eyes of the people. He suggests that to follow such practices is as good as casting away the kernel and holding on to the husk. He laughs at those who claim that the mere wearing of the liṅga leads to liberation :

"What if one tied
To the belly a packet of food :
Would the hunger go ?
If one hangs fast
A Liṅga to one's trunk
Would one be a bhakta ?
If you but fix
A stone on a bush
Is that stone a liṅga,
And will that bush be a bhakta ?
And is the man
Who put it there, a Guru ?
O Guhēśvara, when I see such,
I blush for shame !"

Only when the outward symbol stands for inward purity has it its value. Similarly, he condemns all kinds of showy worship :

"I blush to see
Those that pluck the outer
And worship the outer ..
But if I see
A winkless Liṅga within
And worship it
Within the flower of my mind,
The shame ebbs, and I am
All free from doubt,
O Guhēśvara !"

If you pluck a flower and offer it to Liṅga, its reward returns to the tree. In true worship, the blossoms of the heart must be offered along with the physical flowers. Then alone does the devotee transcend all distinctions, and all question of like and dislike ceases.

"Once you have spent
The body in the body and
The breath in the breath
And thus become past care,
The hunger and the thirst
Have ceased and gone !
Neither remains—
Desire that creates for food,
The sickness that recoils :
This is the key
Of natural content,"

remarks Allama.

Thus, at every step we find in Prabhu's words a free will, an independent spirit, and universal ideas transcending the parochial limits of custom and dogma. In this sense, his vacanas carry lessons welcome to all thinking minds of all times. He was never prepared to trust anything on superstitious belief. If the seeker is to gain strength on the path of truth, he cannot have it by blind belief or perverse argument. Though he pays due regard to rational thinking, he asserts the necessity of faith coupled with thought and practice of principles. In this sense only has he said of the Vedas and Purāṇas :

"The Vedas failed because they were impracticable ;
The Śāstras failed because
They could not achieve anything ;
The Purāṇas failed because
They could not make things perfect
And the elders failed because
They did not know themselves
And were consumed by their own intellects.
How could they know Thee, O Guhēśvara ?"

"What you call Vēda is a work to be read ;
What you call Śāstra is market news ;
What you call Purāṇa is a bully's' boast ;
What you call Logic is butting of rams ;
What you call bhakti is only a show
For profit of a meal ;

What you call Guhēśvara is the Absolute
Beyond bounds."

This does not mean that he slanders the Vēdas. He means to suggest that if they become mere feats of intellect, their very purpose fails, they cannot reveal the true knowledge, and the Truth is beyond their ken. In the words of the *Bhagavadgītā* : "traiguṇya viṣayā veda nistraiguṇyo bhavārjunā nirnavandvo nityasatvastho niryōgakṣema ātmavān". That is, "The action of the three-fold modes is the subject matter of the Vēda ; but do thou become free, O Arjuna, from this three-fold nature; be free from the dualities (the pairs of opposites), be firmly fixed in purity, not caring for acquisition and preservation, and be possessed of the self;" and "The V ēdas are useful to the seers as a well when water is found everywhere." Sri Krishna has indirectly pointed out the limitations of the Vēdas and the Scriptures. All other seekers too have echoed the same voice one way or another. For instance, Kabir has said :

"The Purāna and the Koran are mere words
Lifting up the curtain I have seen."

Kabir gives utterance to the words of

"experience ; and he knows very well
that all other things are untrue."[1]

Thus the mystic experience must transcend mere words.

Even so, Allama too has upheld the importance of the Divine experience above all things. It is not, he observes, liberation to be attained after death :

What does God give
To him who worships
To attain liberation
After his death ?
O Guhēśvara,
Your Śaraṇa becomes
One with you
Having won his release
Without death or pain."

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1. *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, Translated by Rabindranath Tagore.

It is a way of living in the world yet being of it. It is 'like a light in a crystal bowl,' 'like the strength of perfume concentrated in the wind,' the Jīvanmukta state. The seeker's head bends in reverence on seeing the mystic height reached by Prabhu. We notice how all the Śaraṇas have paid, in their vacanas, glowing homage to Prabhu with the same reverence, and how they have sung his praises, being overwhelmed by his light which was a light unto their heart. This is how Cennabasavanna praises Allama :

His is the
Form without shape
Existence that makes itself felt,
Boundlessness beyond all bounds,
Goal attained without any movement
Silence which contains all sound,
Bliss which depends not on mental effort.

Allama, though embodied, is bodiless; though in form, is the Formless incarnate. Basavanna prepared a throne fit to be occupied by such a formless Void of the Void. It is called 'The throne of the Void.' It is a term pregnant with meaning. It is the Void fashioned into a throne. Śūnya is not naught or negation. It is the Void that harboured the All yet transcended the All, and became Itself. It is indeed the supportless Void. It is in this sense that Allama is the Śūnyamurti, or the Void incarnate, the Void as person. At the first sight of Prabhu, Madivala Machayya hymns his praise thus :

"Of him who is rapt in bliss
Of the light of knowledge,
What shall I say
How shall I match
One who has cast the ties
Of the lustre of eye
And is to his body lost?
Unwinking in gaze,
In union dissociate,
Motionless in motion,
Tranquil in rest,

Perfect in gait,
Greater than the great?
O God Kalidēva,
I say Hail, O hail!
To Prabhudēva's feet,
Your Śaraṇas."

From these words it is obvious with what profound reverence the Śaraṇas looked at the glory of Prabhu's Śivādvaita.

We have already seen this height of Prabhu's Divine experience in the episodes of Muktāyi and Siddharāma. Through a few more vacanas of his, which describe the ultimate height of Śivādvaita and the august splendour of the cosmic worship to be performed in that state, we may try to know of his mystic experience at closer quarters:

"Say, if a heap of camphor burn,
Where is the charcoal to be found?
And will a shrine of mist support
A sunlight pinnacle?
When you have shot a waxen dart
Into a pile of burning coal,
Do you expect to find it again?
O Siddharāmayya,
When you have known Guheśvaraliṅga,
Would you still seek for him as God?"

When once one has known Oneself, oneself cannot remain behind. It is just like a mountain of camphor set on fire, like a waxen dart shot into a mountain of fire. He has elsewhere said, "It is as a sunshine pinnacle crowning a mountain of mist." When the sun of knowledge dawns, the mist of the world's ocean melts away. He has also stated that the Spirit that abides in him has pervaded and absorbed him into Itself. It is like the light swallowing the darkness as it were. In one of his vacanas he has said:

"I have become
As fire within the tree
That burns the tree;

Even as the scent
Of the wide-wandering wind
Kissing my nose ;
Even as a soldered doll
Catching fire !
At Guhēśvara's feet
My wheel of births has ceased !"

We have seen, in most of his vacanas so far quoted, that Prabhu had the wonderful gift of compressing his vast experience in a pithy form. Here is another vacana, for instance :

"When in thy flowery bower
Of mine own secure home,
The splendour of the light —
Immaculate, eterne —
And the Śivayogic experience
Were even as one,
Your Śaraṇa, O Guhēśvara,
Was in incomparable bliss !"

To trace out its details would be like breaking the whole experience to pieces : the vacana itself bleeds !

What kind of worship is it that such an accomplished seer undertakes ? Listen to the grandeur of that cosmic worship in his own words :

"To Prāṇaliṅga—
The body is bed,
The Milky way the bath
Worship the fragrance of which needs not any flower
And the word that says
Śiva Śiva ! in
The lotus of the heart,
That is, O Guhēśvara,
Advaita !"

"To the Guru's sunshine
The disciple is the shadow ;
To the tranquil Liṅga
The Void is the bed ;

Breath is the thread,
And light the throne.
Not letting the mind
Run here and there,
O Guhēśvara,
I poured out the bath
And won my bliss !"

"Lo ! the firmament itself
Is the pot of water ; and
Water, the celestial Ganges ;
The sun and the moon are flowers;
Brahma the incense,
Viṣṇu the flame,
Rudra the scared food that is offered,
O Guhēśvara, lo !
Here's your worship, whole !"

The eye of our imagination is dazzled by the brilliance of these vacanas of Prabhu ; our mind is astonished ; and our experience, being unable to raise to that height, quakes with fear. But as the seeker advances on that path, their meaning gradually gets clearer.

Chennabasavanna

Chennabasavanna holds a unique position among the Śaraṇas. It is he who, paying greater attention to the enunciation of Veeraśaiva Siddhānta in his vacanas, gave it a tangible shape and order and expounded it in a systematic manner. And though he strictly followed the tradition of that Siddhānta yet he had the height and sweep of a universal personality that could transcend the tradition.

Emphasizing the need of practice for the principles of a philosophy or the tenets of a religion to attain such fulfilment as can open the eye of consciousness and lead to self-realisation, he condemns the dogmatic beliefs, blind customs and ostentatious show of religion :

"What if one dwells on
A tree-top or on alms ?

What if one goes naked
Casting off one's clothes ?
What if one is above
Time or Karma ?
Howsoever long they may remain,
Who know not the experience
Of Kudala Cenna,
Of what avail ? It's all in vain,
O Sirs, all in vain !"

His was not an over-credulous bhakti, like that of Basavanna who took every devotee to be Kūḍalasaṅga and sat at his feet immediately he met him. Only when their symbolic clerical robes were justified in practice that would he believe in them. He has given expression to this thought here :

"The faith that all that bears
The Liṅga on itself
Is Saṅgamanātha,
Basavanna has attained ; but lo !
That faith is not in me !
Seeing the Śaraṇas who have realised
The consubstantial union
My spirit touched with faith, with love,
Lies prostrate at their feet.
On seeing them, their grace
Pours down on me.
My spirit to their feet
Performs the eight-fold worship
And sixteen kinds of service,
O Kūḍala Cenna Saṅgama Lord.
Seeing the Jaṅgama who is
Thy own, Prabhu, my heart has not enough
Of worshipping again and again !

"What if it is tied round the waist like a coiled snake or wound round the neck like a snake coiled round it ? Unless the practice conforms to the dress he would not trust it :

"They who ask how is
Patience, clean shavenness and bowl,

Know not what they are
If you can stand the troubled agony of body
It is patience.
If you can shave off the worldly objects
It is clean shavenness.
If you can consummate in the Perfect
It is bowl.
If not, it is barrenness of tumblers
In Lord Kūḍala Chenna Saṅga."

Thus he explains the symbolic meaning of external dress. Without which, he asserts, "the vain and the clean-shaven and the careless who have fallen from the chosen path and imbibed all evils, and all others who, being caught in the clutches of pleasure, are ever fond of I and mine," cannot be Jaṅgamas.

Thus we find Chennabasavanna's bhakti is dominated by jñāna, or knowledge. His is not a bhakti so credulous and exuberant as to forget one's reason at the mere utterance of the words Guru, Liṅga or Jaṅgama. But he would forget himself in joy at the sight of a Jangama like Allama Prabhu, dedicate his all to him and sing his glories. He insists that "he who is one with the Divine, boundless and immaculate, endowed with right knowledge, right practice and right work," is a true Jaṅgama. And he was ever willing to surrender his all at his feet.

When outward action and inward consciousness are united all pollutions of body and mind cease. His doctrine, "Work is knowledge and knowledge work" is a truth seekers must ever cherish as the breath of their being.

We find a synthesis of thought and practice in his accomplishment. A Jaṅgama must embody consciousness, religious practice and right work. Right work is Karma performed in a spirit of absolute surrender and complete detachment. The word Satkriyā, in the widest possible connotation, has been realised in him :

"Everything should be offered to the Liṅga
Before the body comes into contact with it
Before the mind touches it,
Before the five senses—

Ear, eye, nose, tongue, and skin—enjoy it
This is what you should do
If you wish to become a Prasādi
Of our Kūḍala Cennasaṅgayya."

This is Satkriyā, or right work. The seeker must dedicate his all to God and look upon it as His Prasāda and serve it as His instrument merely. This is the key of Karma. The same opinion is echoed in another of his vacanas :

"Śarana shall not have a fellowship
Unless there is Liṅga at body's top ;
He shall not look at anything
Unless there is Liṅga at the eye's point ;
He shall not smell anything
Unless there is Liṅga at the nose's point ;
He shall not taste anything
Unless there is Liṅga at the tip of his tongue.
Wherefore ? because, O Kūḍala Cennasaṅgayya,
Thy Śaraṇa is Liṅga-possessed all over his body."

Thus, the seeker must surrender all his senses to God and be "Sarvāṅgaliṅgi", or have Liṅga consciousness in all his senses. For such a bhakta nothing remains apart to dedicate as prasāda. He himself becomes a prasāda to God :

"You can worship
Only once,
But could you do it again ?
You can offer
Only once,
But could you do it again ?
Prasāda can be
Only once,
But could it be again ?
When body is surrendered once
Can it be done again and again,
O Kūḍala Cennaṣangama Lord ?"

Arpita, or offering, cannot be repeated. It can happen once, only once ; and it is sarvārpita, or dedication of all.

Thus this Śaraṇa, who practised what he preached followed

the dedicated path of Ṣaṭsthala, realised the mystery of the consubstantial union of Liṅga and Aṅga, and experienced it fully. He attained the joy of Liṅga through Aṅga, and the joy of Aṅga through Liṅga, and the Supreme bliss through the joy of the union of both. He has sung, "Kūḍala Cennasaṅgayya Himself knows that Bliss."

"It's that which knows nor I nor Thou,
Nor self nor other than the self,
Neither awareness nor unconsciousness,
Nor In or Out. The very word
Lord Kūḍala Cennasaṅga has ceased to exist."

"Where else is the body
When it's become Mahāliṅga
Hugging Thee?
Where else is the mind
When it's become Supramental mind
Hugging Thee?
Where else is the prāna
When it is caught up in prānapada
Hugging Thee?
Kūḍalacennasaṅgayya alone knows
The state of this triple being
Untainted in Liṅga and
Unapparent to the mind."

Thus Cennabasavanna is the Śaraṇa who has attained a state incomprehensible to the mind, which transcends the dichotomies of I and mine and becomes silence-bound; who has made his body, mind and breath pure in Liṅga. All the vacanas quoted above well reveal his height.

The cosmic worship undertaken by him at this height is described in some of his vacanas. For instance:

"Plucking an unfaded flower,
Waving an unextinguished light,
Beauty not perishing, bindu not flowing over,
Before you're spent out and decay,
Knowing the core of Liṅga
Worshipped with unfaded flower,

Cooking in the milk of a cow
That dwells on the mountain top,
Would you offer the feast to our Liṅga
Called Kūḍala Cennasaṅgayya ?"

One must worship Liṅga with an unfaded flower, taking care that its beauty is not spoiled. One should offer a meal prepared in cow's milk which is a constant exercise in Śivayoga. Śiva expects such pure worship of the mind's flower and such a feast. The entire being of a bhakta who worships in such a way shall become worship :

"Body is the temple,
Heart's lotus, a comfortable seat !
Prajñēśvara mounted on knowledge
Is God there !
Haṁsadēva, the master of
The spacious abode there
Is the worshipper.
Liṅga abides mysterious,
Who treads not upon Himself.
Thy Śaraṇa, O Kūḍala Cennasaṅgama Lord,
Is past care, one with the Absolute."

Such words bring out the strength of his discipline. Prabhu's remark, "That you, although in body born, appeared before our eyes, Not wearing an illusive garb... Mark it, Cennabasavanna!" holds up a mirror to his personality. Prabhu has expressed the same opinion more vividly in another vacana :

"With body made an offering to the Guru,
The mind to Liṅga, and will to Jaṅgama ;
The self to bliss, the Absolute
Offered to Consciousness ;
When offered was the unoffered, and
The unoffered offered, so
The difference between
The offered and unoffered was no more,
Cennabasavanna, Guhēśvara's Śaraṇa,
Became the perpetual Prasādi

And, pointing the Prasāda way,
Made man understand it clearly.

This vacana also reveals the nature of his spiritual pursuit.

Cennabasavanna was highly distinguished among the Śaraṇas as a precious genius. We can well realise the height of his genius if an accomplished seer like Prabhu can extol him thus:

"What means this young and old?
In wisdom there is
No difference of age.
Timeless and time were not,
Myriads of microcosms and macrocosms
Had yet not dawned,
When it was known that you alone
Were a great Seer
In Guhēśvaraliṅga.
That's so, Cennabasavanna!"

On several occasions he cautioned Basavanna and guided him in his spiritual discipline. Let us consider one incident by way of example.

In the episode of Prabhu's Feast, symptoms of the slightest ego crop up in Basavanna's devotion. He suffers under an error, "I can satisfy Prabhu by offering anything he demands." In order to break his pride, Prabhu feigns not to be satisfied with any amount of food. Not knowing how to satisfy him, Basavanna is nonplussed; the counsel given by Cennabasavanna then is fascinating:

"Five hundred billion vasty globes and more,
The nine-zoned earth—all, all are hid
In this one universe.... What shall I say
About the madness of His mastership
Who hoped to feed the mighty Absolute
Who has incorporated in Himself
Fourteen such worlds?
If you would have the key
To Kūḍala Cennasaṅga's content,
It's you should be the main dish,

The side-dish me . . . There's naught
Higher than this—mark you,
Saṅgana Basavanna !"

The highest offering to be made at the feet of Jaṅgama, or God, is, according to Cennabasavanna, one's own self. That is the highest dish. Cennabasavanna is one who has dedicated his all at the feet of his Lord, who has received pādōdaka, or holy water, after washing His feet with water of no water. He is a Praṣādi who looked upon the entire universe as His Grace and found it everywhere. He is one who has become one with the Universe, as void melting into void, turning body, mind and will into naught.

While praising his sublimity, Prabhu has also beautifully brought out the mystery of the Śaraṇa's way of discipline in another vacana of his :

"The men of the world were caught
In the coils of human existence,
The divine beings were caught
In the coils of their divinity ;
The ascetics of the ascetic world were caught
In the coils of the asceticism.
The worshippers of Jaṅgama were caught
In the coils of Sāyujya ;
The Rudra Ganas of Rudra were caught
In the coils of the office of Rudra ;
The wearers of the Liṅga were caught
In the coils thereof ;
The devotees of Prasāda and Pādōdaka were caught
In the coils of the Prasāda ;
Let Guhēśvaralinga bear witness, I
Say, 'Hail, O hail !' to Cennabasavanna,
From every kind of bondage free !"

Men and angels, seekers and sages, all are, one way or another, subject to the spell of Saṁsāra. That which could have been a means of liberation becomes, on several occasions, a source of bondage. The seeker should make use of them to the extent that they are necessary for his liberation, and rise

beyond their limits. One who has thus risen high is Cennabasavanna, is Basavēśvara, is Prabhu. Basava's bhakti, Prabhu's complete renunciation, Cennabasava's knowledge—each took them to the same height. Hence Prabhu's praise of Cennabasavanna, or Basavanna's homage to Prabhu is not meant to indicate that one is superior to the other. If Basavanna praises Cennabasavanna :

"My body's darkness is dispelled,
Cennabasavanna ; today my lust
Of body, mind and wealth
Was routed and destroyed ; today
The pride that has possessed me vanished quite,
O Cennabasavanna ! today
As you have shown the way to satisfy
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama, I have been savèd—
Mark that, Cennabasavanna !"

the latter esteems the former as Guru and extols him :

"Basavanna, my glorious Guru
Killed my within and without, O Sire !"
"Through Basavanna have I become
A Sarvāngaliṅgi."
"Basavanna, the Śaraṇa, removed the myth of will."
"All hail to Basavanna my Guru
Who has shown me the Liṅga,
Kūḍala Cennasaṅgayya."

Their spiritual discipline proved mutually complementary. And in the ultimate state both proved to be one. Though they praise each other, yet both have transcended that praise. We must take only in this sense Prabhu's extolling of Basavanna and Cennabasavanna or the latter praising him in return.

Basavanna, Cennabasavanna and all the other Śaraṇas have praised Prabhu with one voice, as is well known to readers of their vacanas. As he came to Kalyāṇa he had already attained the supreme height. When Basavanna, paying his homage to Prabhu,

"On the altar of petalless flower
When the formless Supreme took form,

It was a wonder the world over.
I cry hail, O hail
To Prabhu's holy feet,
Kūḍala Saṅga's Śaraṇa,"

placed him, the Void incarnate, on the throne of the Void and worshipped; or when Prabhu praises Basavanna in return:

"I am the brave sentinel of thy Great House,"
"Through Saṅgana Basavanna my body has ceased to be,"
"Having sought the refuge
Of Saṅgana Basavanna, the Śaraṇa,
I am saved;"

or praises Cennabasavanna:

"Through Cennabasavanna I am saved,"

we are really astonished. It only suggests that both Basavanna and Cennabasavanna had attained to Prabhu's height. All three had become one and the same.

Siddharāma and Maḍivāḷa Mācayya

Not only Prabhu, Basavanna and Cennabasavanna but all the other Śaraṇas who have reached the ultimate goal of their pursuit, have become one in the sublimity of consubstantial union of Liṅga and Aṅga. Among them, Siddharāma and Maḍivāḷa Mācayya may be notably mentioned.

Siddharāma's is a very eminent name among the Śaraṇas. We have already seen the nature of his discipline, to a limited extent, in the episode of Allama. His bhaktimārga, or path of devotion, with its faith in form, and his karmamārga, or path of work, with its humanitarian compassion—having both been consummated in the afflatus of Allama's knowledge, Siddharāma becomes Śiva's Siddharāma. Later on, attaining the Iṣṭaliṅga from Cennabasavanna at Kalyāna, he understands the perfect state of Śivayoga and becomes the consummate Śivayogin.

We may briefly try to understand the meaning and concept of the term 'Śivayogi'. The word yoga is a very ancient and

important term in the Hindu religion. There is evidence to believe that there was in vogue, as long ago as 700-800 B.C., a type of yogic exercise through which, making the ruffled mind calm, an amazing power could be attained.[1]

Each thinker has specified in his own way the scope and connotation of this word. Patanjali's 'Aphorisms of Yoga' defines it as: "yogaścittavṛtti nirodhaḥ," or "yoga is the cessation of the mind's modifications." The Gītā enunciates:

"yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi
saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhananjaya
siddhyasiddhyoḥ samō bhūtvā
samattvaṁ yōga ucyate,"

or "Fixed in yoga, do thy work, O winner of wealth (Arjuna), abandoning attachment, with an even mind in success and failure, for evenness of mind is called yoga;" and a little later, "yogaḥ karmāsu kauśalaṁ", or "yoga is skill in action." The definition of yoga in the Gītā as renunciation in action gave a much wider and more comprehensive meaning to the word. In this sense the terms Bhaktiyoga, Karmayoga, Jñānayoga etc. indicate the various means of attaining equipoise through bhakti, karma and jñāna. But when yoga means primarily a fund of energy that may be had through the exercise of prāṇāyāma arresting the mind's modifications and focussing its power at one centre, yoga is usually classified into four modes: Mantrayoga, Layayoga, Haṭhayoga and Rājayoga. The last one has won an eminent position among them. Unlike other yogas, it does not prescribe mortification of the body but lays greater emphasis upon the restraint of the mind's dispositions.

In the Ṣaṭsthala system of Veeraśaivism we notice the influence of this yoga to a considerable extent. Besides, curiously enough, it is also criticised by the Śaraṇas. But they do not criticize the genuine exercises of yoga. When these exercises, bypassing their main purpose of attaining inward purity, become mere mortifications of body and absorb themselves in meaner feasts, the Śaraṇas do ridicule them.

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1. Dasgupta, S. N., *Hindu Mysticism.*

One may be reminded of the occasion when Prabhu met Gorakṣa. The latter has made his body as hard as stone by his practice of Haṭhayoga. He displays his power before Prabhu in overveening pride and insolence. Prabhu strikes his body with a sword, but all those strokes, without piercing his body, rebound as if from hard rock. Prabhu just smiles at this and demonstrates his own strength and power with a view to breaking the inordinate pride of Gorakṣa and opening his inward eye. Hence he returns the sword to Gorakṣa asking him to hit his body. The latter, not knowing the nature of Prabhu's yogic powers, strikes at Prabhu's body with his usual pride. But to no purpose; the sword neither rebounds nor is there any sound produced. It is hitting the air, as it were. The sword cuts through Prabhu's body, but he stands smiling as before. Gorakṣa's pride is now smashed and he lays himself down at Prabhu's feet, admitting his defeat.

This is the state of true Śivayogi. Should a man undergo such mortifications just to make his body a hard stone and nothing more? To become Void or the Absolute is his life's aim. The seeker should attain to that The yoga which attains it is Śivayoga.

The Śaraṇas do not accept as final the definition of yoga as "citta vṛtti nirodha," or "the cessation of mind's modifications." To restrain and control the ever restive mind which runs after pleasures is not itself the real yoga. Though it is found to be necessary in the initial stages, the practicant must go beyond, and, annihilating the desires of mind, attain to a state where the restraint becomes spontaneous. Mind must cease to be. Hence yoga does not mean mere cessation of the mind's modifications, but its sublimation into a pure or sacred channel. The means to accomplish this objective is for the seeker himself to become pure within as well as without by establishing the triple Liṅga in his triple body. He must advance in his pursuit through the dedicated work he has undertaken, ever living here, yet not as it were. To the seeker who is able to bring his restless mind to rest in the consciousness and to merge it therein, Guhēśvaraliṅga, as Allama states, appears as pure light. He too

melts into light as light, into space as space. This is Śivayoga.[1]

We have already seen that Prabhu has explained the sublimity of this Śivayoga to Siddhārama. Cennabasavanna completes it explaining it along with the triple Liṅga. Siddharama becomes the Śivayogi, surrendering his body, mind and wealth to Śiva, and undertakes Karmayoga with a spirit of absolute egolessness.

"I am that" (sōhaṁ) is an inward pride, whereas "I am Śiva" (Śivōhaṁ) an outward pride. Hence, transcending these two, he prays, "make me regarded Thy slave." In this prayer of his we see the course of his spiritual exercise. In one place he has declared, "I call him a pure Liṅgaikya who, knowing that Śiva is the giver as well as the enjoyer, accepts only that substance which comes through Liṅga. By whatever has come through Liṅga becoming all in all to him, he has become a Prāṇaliṅgi. He has come out "a single spirit in two bodies and a witness in three bodies." He has seen "the Supreme Lord reposed in the shade of the mind's bower," and in the light of the splendour of knowledge, the memory :

"My Lord's way is not like that of others
What others know
He knows not.
What he knows
None else knows
He sits where he desires ;
If not remains as if
He is not,
Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna."

Thus, being a wife to the Supreme Lord longing to unite with Him, he affirms, "I fail to pursue Thee; denying my body, I unite with Thee through the body of knowledge," and finally has become one with Him :

"Oh ye, my Lord
I see not before I unite with thee,

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1. Māggeya Māyidēva, *Śatakatraya*—Leaving out the former five steps — yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma and pratyāhāra — of the eightfold yoga, it is noticed, the latter three steps—dhyāna, dhāraṇa and samādhi—are accepted as of primary importance in Śivayōga.

I see not again after I unite,
I know not you and I
Through the joy of union,
O Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna !"

Thus he has forgotten himself through the joy of his union with his Lord. He ascends to the height where "the Śaraṇa, like a fish in water, which yet does not permit water to enter its nose, though living in Saṁsāra is not subject to it". He is happy knowing the core of Self-experience :

"If you ask me to pour
for bath, what shall I pour ?
I've seen the Prāṇaliṅga within !
They pluck the outer flower
And worship the outer ;
But such a formal rite
I do not need.
How are they happy who know not
The worth of Self-experience ?
Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna
Wants them not ;"

and

"As soon as my desire is fulfilled
I know not the desire called mind.
As soon as the thought of Thee
Has fully possessed my mind,
I know not the bond of desire.
As soon as the thought of Thee
Has flooded my heart of hearts,
Thou hast had the foremost place
Within my mind, O Lord,
Kapilasiddha Mallinātha !"

Thus, eliminating all sorts of doubts and resolves, he has attained the divine eye which sees Kapilasiddha Mallināthayya everywhere. Ever marching on this path, "possessing the pure consciousness in his Karmayoga," he transcends the bounds of Karma, Bhakti and Jñana and shines as "the Undivided without triple division."

Beholding the majesty of Siddharāmayya, Prabhu pays his tribute : "I cry hail, O hail to the majesty of Siddharāmayya, our Guhēśvara's Śaraṇa." In the same vein Cennabasavanna extols him: "Day and night I cry hail, O hail, to Siddharāmayya, the scourge of Māyā, and am saved, O Prabhu." From these praises we can imagine to what height he had soared in his spiritual as well as yogic ascent.

Maḍivāḷa Mācayya

Similarly, Maḍivāḷa Macayya too could command the warmest and most glowing tribute from all these Śaraṇas. He is celebrated among the Śaraṇas for his remarkable faith. Being ever absorbed in his Kāyaka, or dedicated labour, he followed the path of discipline with a single-pointed faith and attained fulfilment. Right from Prabhu to Basavanna and Cennabasavanna, all have paid homage to him :

"It is like hugging a statue of hailstone ;
Like camphor lifting the veil of fire ;
Light invading the dark night.
O Basavanna,
Because of the grace
Of Father Maḍivāḷa Mācayya,
Guhēśvara's Śaraṇa,
I saw both you and Madivāḷa
As though the two were one !"

Prabhu has thus looked upon Basavanna and Maḍivāḷa as one. In another vacana he has acknowledged, "knowing the height of thy majesty through Maḍivāḷa's grace I have been saved." "Before Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama I am saved by crying hail, O hail, to the holy feet of Father Maḍivāḷa"—thus extolled Basavanna ; and Cennabasavanna followed suit in several of his vacanas. To such a great height had Mācayya attained through his unflinching faith alone, which fact should never be lost sight of in our appraisal of him.

Maḍivāḷa Mācayya was a washerman who washed not the dirt of clothes only, but that of the mind also. Basavēśvara has said in one of his vacanas that Mācayya is able to wash off

the dirt of the vices of the senses by dipping the body in the water of equanimity and wringing it in the water of knowledge. Thus Mācayya, surrendering his Kāyaka itself to the feet of Śiva, "finding Saṅgana Basavanna in body's practice, Cennabasavanna in mind's consciousness and Prabhu on the point of will" had become "integral with Śiva, being himself without burden in body, without grief in mind, without wish in will."

He has seen the nature of Śiva :

"Śiva is inherent in Śaraṇa,
Bhakta's body is my body,
And he is perfect in dāsōha."

He very clearly affirms that, even after knowledge is attained, the seeker must not forsake action :

"Would you, attaining Consciousness,
Give up activity ?
When sweet is added unto sweet,
Is one diminished by the other, pray ?
When money is added to money,
Is room therein for poverty?
Each deed that's done must keep
Both gaze and heart upon
Worship of Siva : is that not
O Candayya,
Union with Lord Kalidēva ?"

If kriyā weds knowledge, it is like sweet mixing with sweet, wealth added to wealth. Its fruit ever grows larger—remarks Maḍivāḷayya.

His is a plain and direct path. It is easy for those who practise it after knowing it. He has revealed the secret of his progress and his becoming a Śaraṇa through his humble kāyaka itself, as follows :

"Oh ye Sirs, who speak
With polish, 'we are Śaraṇas,'
Tell me the secret of
How you have become Śaraṇas ;
Listen if you know not.

It is he
Who has burnt all corporal cravings,
Who has put his mind's shame behind,
Who has pulverized the functions of his will
And thrown them to the winds,
Who has known the real faith of bhakti,
Who, having shown to his wife and children
The right path without fraud or flaw—
He is the real Śaraṇa indeed,
O God of Kalideva."

This is the path that Maḍivāḷa Mācayya himself pursued and showed to other worldly persons. In one of his vacanas he has counselled,

"Make you no vow to abstain from aught,
No resolution to do aught
Only when the will is controlled
Is it purified."

Thus, going through the path laid down by himself, he became endowed with triple attainment :

"In body's palm did I possess Liṅga ;
In the eyes of ire did I possess Jaṅgama ;
On the tip of my tongue, the Prasāda ;
Thus the triple did I possess :
Mark, O God of Kalideva ;"

and realised the consubstantial union with the Divine.

"The ceasing of the body and the mind,
Of memory, of knowledge and of will—
In the cessation of these five, the 'I'
Has ceased to be ; in the cessation, 'Thou'
Has ceased to be. The word which says
Kalideva's Lord
Is the 'Silence called Brahma.' "

Thus he ultimately scaled the summit of silence. Everything has gone now—body, mind, will, wish; only truth has remained. He has become one with God Kalidēva.

"I have become one
In ultimate space,

In integral union with
The God of Kalidēva."

Thus we notice that all the Śaraṇas attained to the same summit at the end of their pursuit. Haḍapada Appanna said:

"Bowing to the feet of the Śaraṇas
Who, identifying their word and deed,
Have become Śiva incarnate,
I have been saved."

Dēvara Dasimayya has stated :

"I shall be an ox for the Śaraṇa,
I shall be a slave to the Śaraṇa,
I shall be a watch dog
Guarding as a servant
The gates of the devotees.
I shall be a fence to the backyards
Of the houses of Bhaktas who bow to Thee
With folded hands, O Rāmanātha."

Mōḷige Mārayya :

"Without declining what is come,
Without yearning for what is not,
Serving those who come to eat,
Giving to those who come to beg,
You should know the Height."

Aṁbigara Cauḍayya :

"I have come, a rower without body
Playing in the great river headless and fathomless.
If you give your wavering mind as fare,
I shall ford you across the great river,
And place you in a village beyond words and bounds."

All these Śaraṇas, it can be seen from their aforesaid words, were absorbed in their respective works; but, making them stepping-stones, they ascended to the peak. Thus all the truths they realised in their philosophy they actually implemented in their daily life. Whether the Śaraṇa be an ascetic or saṁsāri, a seer or a devotee, man or woman—all of them were doing their daily duties. But none the less, without attaching themselves to them, they tread the path of discipline with a spirit of absolute dedication and unreserved surrender.

CHAPTER III

TRENDS OF ŚARAṆA THOUGHT

1. *Individual Attainment and Teaching :*

In the foregoing chapter we tried to perceive the Śaraṇa Vision of Truth and their way of attaining it. We also noticed how their pursuit finally led them all to the sole and singular goal of consubstantial union of Liṅga and aṅga. They all had set out on the divine pilgrimage inspired by the loftiest ideal that man could ever conceive. Most of them had actually reached it and accomplished their life's fulfilment. They had to encounter various odds and ordeals on their way. Every seeker must pass through the stages of inner development, like self-abnegating humility, intense yearning for the Divine, and insistent ardour for self-realisation. Along with it they had to face several social problems, many a time strong opposition, through their ideas of a revolutionary, thought-provoking and comprehensive nature. But they faced them all boldly; subjected them to a severe test, drove out the humbug and upheld the essence. They discovered the core of truth and placed it before the people in plain and precise words and thus led them on the way to the Divine.

The stream of thought set forth by the Śaraṇas had then enough strength to lead not only the society of their own times but that of all times and climes ; because they, without relying upon blind belief in matters of religious faith, and of social or individual advance, have discovered an abiding answer to life's strife. Though inspired by the religious books of the past, they boiled them all in the crucible of their personal experience and, throwing away the dross, accepted only the sterling gold. With the assistance of their independent scientific mind, they analysed religion, revised it in the light of their intuitional consciousness, let it be born again in their own practice, and proclaimed it, with themselves as its living forces. What they felt to be truth they never feared to propound. On several occasions their firm,

direct and unrelenting utterances enraged the followers of the blind social traditions of their day. Their words that proclaimed truth sounded revolutionary and went a long way to remove the rust clinging to contemporary religion and society and kindle the light of truth. Let us have a passing look at the trend of their thoughts.

Here we propose to deal, primarily, with their views on the entire humanity, and their words which should serve as leading guides to all seekers aspiring to accomplish the highest human values of life, irrespective of barriers of custom, creed or sect, under the following heads : 'individual attainment and instruction', 'social structure' and 'religious practice'. Let us consider, to begin with, individual attainment and instruction.

Man is a social being. For the complete growth and development of his talents, for attaining the final goal of life and perfect bliss he has to depend upon society in several ways. The one basic motive, it may be said, for his being a member of society and for his unending struggle in this multiphased society, is to fulfil this fundamental aspiration.

It is quite essential that, along with the society, every individual who is its constituent unit must also advance. If the individuals become great, the society constituted of them will also become great. Every individual must utilise the welfare of his society for the path of his discipline and accomplish his individual advancement. Inward development is the bounden duty of every individual. Only when he accomplishes it shall his life's purpose as a man be fulfilled. In this sense only did the Śaraṇas expect that every individual member of the society must become a seeker, and carried to every home the method—which was comprehensive enough—by which every individual could become that.

An individual, wheresoever he be, without being fully content with his worldly life, will, one day or other, long for the inner joy of his soul which transcends this life. But many a time that sprout of aspiration is crushed under the heavy weight of worldly pleasures and wastes itself away. Without giving scope for such a thing to happen, the seeker must nourish that divine discontent and nurture it to its growth. He must cover

that flame, that it may not be extinguished in the storms of life. Through constant practice and exercise he must brighten the light of his self to its perfection. The Śaraṇas, themselves seasoned seekers, have deeply thought over the duties and qualifications necessary for the seeker treading this path and recorded their experiences.

We may note a beautiful vacana of Prabhu in this context:

"My body I have made a garden,
My mind a spade . . .
I have dug up illusion's weeds,
Broken up the clods of worldliness,
Harrowed the earth, and sown
The Spirit's seed.
The thousand-fold lotus is my well,
My water-wheel, my breath;
From my subtle nerve I have
Channelled the water.
And to keep out the five
Bulls of sense
That might trample my crops,
I have set up all round
Patience and poise as fence.
Behold, O Guhēśvara!
Night and day I have lain awake
To protect my tender plants."

This vacana, which describes Prabhu's own way of spiritual discipline, stands as a model to all other seekers. Every seeker must specially bear in mind and ever return to the last two lines. At every step he must introspect and search his heart and strengthen the fence of patience and poise.

Among the ethical practices we may make two divisions: one is the way that helps us to lead a life of coexistence with society; the other, a way of living that may make for individual progress. One is social ethics, the other, individual ethics. As a matter of fact, they are not two separate entities. It is only when the two are identified with each other that we shall attain the perfect life. The Śaraṇas have laid before the seeker such a way of perfection.

The Śaraṇas, who had believed that an individual could not enhance the prestige of society unless he ennobled his own personal life, gave the highest prominence to the individual's redemption, his personal conduct and character and to his right way of life and action. They mounted up the ladder of right living and climbed to the height. Hence they have affirmed, "the ladder is the flight to climb the height." They have also fashioned a ladder for others to climb. Bearing in mind, chiefly the triple step of body, mind and wealth, we may briefly inquire into the trend of ethical thought among the Śaraṇas.

This body, this gross body, is mortal, not lasting, changing; it is doomed to perish in the end. But the soul within is immortal. The Bhagavadgītā says:

> "Just as a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, even so does the embodied soul cast off worn-out bodies and take on others that are new."

But it does not mean that the body is unimportant and unholy. Just as fire has to manifest through things, even so the soul must undertake discipline wearing this body. The body is an indispensable and holy means for the divine pursuit. Without condemning it we must mould it as a voluntary means fit for our pursuit—so counsel the Śaraṇas We should note the following words of Mahādēviyakka:

> "Look you, good sirs:
> Association with a snake is good
> Provided you can draw its fangs
> And make it play; just so,
> If you completely understand
> Your contact with the flesh,
> Association with the flesh is good;
> The passions of the body are
> As if your mother had become
> A monster....
> Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord,

Do not say they have a body, who
Are loved by you."

When the body is freed from its earthly traits and God is established therein, it shall be the holiest centre.

The Śaraṇas looked upon the body as a temple. Prabhu asks, 'when the body itself is a temple what need for another?' Basavanna echoes the same :

"Those who have money build
Temples to Śiva : what can I build ?
A poor man, Lord, am I !
My body is the shrine,
Its pillars are my legs,
The golden pinnacle, my head.
Hear me, Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
There is destruction for what stands,
But not for that—which moves !"

This body is a moving temple. Another Vacanakāra, Śaraṇa Mallayya by name, comparing this form of the body to a temple, has described it more vividly still :

"Be my feet the footstone,
My legs, the date-tree pillars,
My arms, the beam-rest,
My bones, the rafters around,
My lips, a handsome door,
My Guru's grace, the Liṅga,
My body, the central arena,
My heart-lotus, the worship,
My ears, the reporters of praise,
My tongue that intones, the bell,
My head, the golden pinnacle,
My eyes, the undimmed light,
My skin, a covering pure,
My remembrance, food for Thee :
Gurupura Mallayya abides in me."

Thus he suggests that every part of his body is holy. Only when the temple of the body is pure does the divine power

manifest in the core of the heart. In brief, for every seeker who pursues his goal the body is a veritable necessity and a sacred means—the Śaraṇas observe. They further advise that the seeker should nourish it, nurture it, but, without halting at that stage, he should move on. Purity of body must lead to sanctity of mind. Without succumbing to the infatuation of body, one must be led to the path of truth. Ādayya expects the seeker to attain this state :

> "No fondness for body, non-ego in mind,
> No fear in prāṇa, disinterestedness in consciousness."

Here the words 'no fondness for body' should be carefully marked. Without being subject to the infatuation of body, the seeker should nourish it and find, through this mortal medium, the immortal truth.

The same is the case with wealth and property. It would not be proper to dislike or condemn it, too, as Māyā. It is an indispensable need in all our worldly affairs. Hence, even in spiritual pursuits wealth or property need not be damned. But it must not become the source of all attachments and bonds. The way of acquiring as well as spending it must stand on self-sacrifice and be unsullied. Basavanna's remark in this context should be specially marked :

> "The sinner's wealth serves not a worthy cause—
> Only to expiate his sons !
> A dog's milk serves only a dog,
> Not for a five-fold bath.
> Mark, Sir ! The wealth you render any one
> But our Kūḍala Saṅga's Śaraṇas,
> Is given in vain !"

Hence wealth must be earned by right means and spent for right causes and in right ways.

The money that is earned after honest efforts of body and mind will alone be fit for the dedicated service of Guru, Liṅga and Jaṅgama. The Śaraṇas question, "Is that dāsōha which is performed in the name of Kāyaka through begging and pestering (others) without exertion to the flesh, the body being

melted and the mind being touched?" Candayya voices the same:

"To beg and bring from wheresoever you see,
By fretting, worrying, injury, duress,
To do this irksome work
For serving Liṅga and Jaṅgama,
They are not enough
As offerings to Liṅga.
By letting the body melt and the mind
Realise the worth of what is come of toil—
Is without doubt or question, an act
Of service to Jaṅgamaliṅga.
A kāre leaf
Come from dedicated work
Is worthy to be offered
To Liṅga; but one that comes
Of covetousness is not.
Therefore, the timeless thing
That comes of dedicated work,
Righteous and pure, is
To Candēśvaraliṅga
Consecrated food."

The Śaraṇas rejected money that came out of greed. But money in itself is not contemptible; it assists us in following the path of truth. The point to be noted here is that money by itself does not deserve contempt. The bent of mind that governs the means of earning money carries with it either scorn or praise. They insist that we must traffic with money in the spirit that we are mere instruments and without having any taint of the feeling, 'I have earned it' or 'it is mine.'

Thus, both the body and money attain value through the mind that governs them. When the mind gets mean, that is the end of bhakti:

"Conception is the scorpion's end;
To bear fruit, the banana plant's!
To falter is the warrior's end,

However armed, upon the battlefield !
For a bhakta's heart to stoop and droop
Is for him the end,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

announces Basavanna. The mind itself is the source of bondage as well as liberation. Purity of heart is the basis of all kinds of pursuits. All outward activities without inward purity are a waste of effort. All attempts to seek progress through ostentatious discipline are as futile as seeking to draw out oil from sand. The Śaraṇas condemn such futile efforts:

"What if the body is naked, if
The heart's not clean within ?
What if you go with shaven head
Unless you have an empty will ?
What if you smear yourself with ash
Unless you've trampled underfoot and burnt
Your sensual passions and the like ?
Mark you, Saṅgana Basavanna :
Before Guhēśvara I say —
Towards that mask the face of greed
I say, fie, fie !"

These are of no use ; the shaven head, the naked body and the ash-bath ; "only when the work that one does turns into Bhasma one is a Śaraṇa." No use washing without unless the heart within is washed. One must 'shave off' the greeds of mind. Without these necessary qualifications the so-called bhaktas are mere impostors, pious only in their garb. The Śaraṇas condemn such as these very severely :

"Where is not a guise ?
In a harlot, a tumbler,
In a player of many parts, is it not there ?
For the harlot's or maid's children
That scrape a living on their motley guise,
Where would be true piety
In Rāmēśvara Liṅga
For whom discipline is his very breath ?"

asks Merēmiṇḍadēva. All religious rites and practices will gain strength only when they are observed with a pure and enlightened heart. Notice what Chennabasavanna has to say in this context :

"What if you offer
A sham piety ten thousand times ?
What if you perform worship
Without faith times without number,
Unless the will is settled ?
What if you take prasāda,
Many a time, without truth ?
It would be just a habit
But not true and approved.
One copies the other,
But they know not to
Think for themselves.
Such witless fools
Who know not these details
Should not be called
Bhaktas and Mahēśvaras.
Before Thee, O Kūḍala Cennasanga, Lord,
I say woe unto such !"

For one to copy another without self-introspection and self-judgement is a sure sign of thoughtless ignorance. It is not a true exercise. All such showy braggarts fall a prey to death. Prabhu has given expression to this in a vacana of his :

"In dread of a thief
If you rush to the woods
Does a tiger fail to eat you ?
In dread of a tiger
If you enter an anthill
Does a serpent fail to bite you ?
In dread of death
If you become a bhakta
Does your Karma fail to eat you ?
What shall I say of hypocrites,
O Guhēśvara, who have become a prey to death ?"

Piety should spring from within, to allay the divine discontent and not as an ostentatious show for public applause. Then the devotee's exercise finds its fulfilment. Otherwise, all outward activities, as Prabhu says, will be like 'tying a packet of food upon the belly of one who is hungry'. Thereby the seeker's hunger cannot be appeased. See how Prabhu proclaims the value of remembering Truth :

"Waste not a day
In counting beads
Waste not a day
In worshipping a stone.
A moment at least
Remembering Truth is enough.
Let it be half a moment,
Remembering Truth is enough.
Could the heat of fire
Be found in water, O Guhēśvara ?"

Unless the inward eye is opened by remembrance of the Absolute, what boots the mere counting of beads or the worship of a stone ? Basavanna has stated the same truth more lucidly :

"If you strike the anthill
Will the snake die ?
What if you perform
The severest penance,
Will Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Have trust in those
Whose heart is not pure ?

Mere mortification of body is of no avail. The vices that lodge therein must be extirpated. It is not a true exercise of the spirit if one bathes in rivers, performs some showy rites, or leaps here and there in the name of sanctity Listen. to Basavanna:

"O brothers, ye who dip into a stream,
O masters, ye who dip into a stream,
Renounce, renounce, renounce
Relations with another's wife ;
Renounce

The lusting for another's goods !
For if you dip into a stream
Without renouncing these,
'Twill be as dipping into a stream
That has run dry,
O Kuḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

Continuing in this strain, the Śaraṇas disdain the seeker's undertaking of pilgrimages to sacred centres without turning his mind to virtuous ways. Of what avail is it to visit hundreds of holy places or to bathe in the Ganga? Mark how Siddharāma remonstrates :

"What boots
If you merely bathe in the Ganga,
While hurting another's mind
And damaging his house ?
He is the holiest
Who hurts not another's heart
Nor damages his well being."

Without having such inner holiness it is sheer waste of time and energy to go round the so-called holy centres. Another reproves himself :

"Roaming about in error
In regions six-and-fifty,
Treading upon flints and thorns
My mind wrought its own ruin
By not having bhakti.
Not letting me waste thus
Pray make me watch
The gates of Haralayya,
Thy devotee, O Guruliṅga-Jaṅgama!"

Aṁbigara Cauḍayya reminds us that all the sacred centres abide in the human body ; hence there is no need to wander the world over in search of them. Mark how he condemns such practices :

"....My body is Benares,
Belly, the Kēdāra,
My hands, that worship and serve

Are Rāmēsvara and the bridge ;
The head that bears Mahaliṅga
Is Mount Śriśaila.
Not knowing the truth of this,
Those who go to Śriśaila,
Bathe in Pātāḷa Gaṅgā,
Shave their heads clean,
Again plunge into the same river
Like a buffalo diseased of skin,
Give food, clothes and flower in charity
Believing their sins are washed thereby
And strike their heads against the idol,
They welcome of their own accord
Sin that is never expected
And will be born again
In the womb of a goat,
O Lord...."

Hence a dip in sacred waters or a pilgrimage to the sacred centres is nothing but error. Siddhaliṅga affirms, "Holding in the palm of meditation the mind that runs in several directions, anchoring it in liṅga, if you can unite therewith, there abides Śaṁbhu, the Supreme God." Prabhu has given expression to the same idea :

"No use in roaming round the world,
Bathing in millions of Ganges is of no use.
Of no use, too, if you
Scale to the highest peak
Of Mount Meru and shout
No use if you touch your
Body daily without fail ;
If you hold in your mind,
In consciousness, without
Letting it run here and there,
Firmly every day,
It is nothing but light,
O Guhēśvara."

When the mind is focussed and concentrated at a single point,

the Supreme Light effulges and the nature of that Liṅga is apprehended. This is the real worship. The Śaraṇa who undertakes such worship need not rove round the world seeking sacred waters or pilgrim centres. The very courtyard of his home shall become a veritable Vāraṇāsi. Listen to Siddhārāma:

"In the courtyard of an
Unswerving Śaraṇa, dwell
Holy centres eight-and-sixty.
They dwell if you are a little
Pleased, O Kapila Siddha Mallinātha, Lord!"

Thus the Śaraṇas give the foremost importance to an individual's inward purity. They hold aloft the true seeker and experient of the Divine as a model before every individual. As against this, they severely damned sham observances and showy piety. Observing the hypocrites who worship for hours together only to cloak their evils and vices, Ṣanmukhaswami condemns them as follows:

"What if you worship
With heaps and heaps of flowers and leaves
Piled and piled upon Liṅga,
Unless you have become disembodied
By surrendering body, mind and wealth?
The vicious fools, who traffic
In theft and lies and adultery,
Our Lord Akhaṇḍēswara shuns."

It would not do if you merely pour water from a lake and flowers from a tree. Siddharama asks, "If you must pour water on Him, does He toil in the sun?" He adds, "If one can worship Him with his heart as water and knowledge as flower, I call him the bhakta, the Maheśvara, mark, O Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna Lord." Basavanna pities those who drench God in mere water:

"You bring carts full of bilva leaves,
Pour water for the bath
Wherever you please,
If you must worship, clear

The triple pain
Which Liṅga hates.
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Does not grow soft
With a mere water bath !"

The enlightened way of religious living is filled with the Divine, whereas ignorant practice is shrouded with Māyā. The latter is as the bullock going round the oil-mill with blinkers. Such ignorant actions lead to bondage. Sanctity observed with knowledge is the root of liberation—observes Cennabasvanna. He further observes :

"If you are holy
Your worldly traffic must cease to be ;
If you are the ultimate
The five senses must cease to be.
To the holy way of life
Which has abolished all doubts
About the Creator,
There's neither rebirth
Nor worldliness nor illusion.
Unless these cease to be
One cannot be deemed holy
By our Lord Kūḍala Cennasaṅga."

Such a sanctity or holiness is the root, of liberation, to attain which there is no need of ostentatious worship; no need of roving in several places. As Prabhu says : "If you can focus the mind, which runs here and there, at a single point, Guhēśvaraliṅga will be seen within."

When the mind, which usually runs scattered in several directions, is made to flow in a single channel and centred at one point, it acquires amazing power. Mark how Ādayya has said that the mind itself can grant the status of Mahādēva, or God :

"Happy is he
Who abstracts his mind
That runs through all senses,

Unhappy is he
Who moves mean-minded
As a slave to the five senses.
If the mind moves outward
He is trafficker.
If the mind moves within
He is a perfect seer.
If the mind abides in the Supreme
He is the liberated.
If the mind cease to be
He is inseparable from
Saurāṣṭra Sōmēśvaraliṅga."

Siddharāma has beautifully described the nature of such a mind :

"Mind is not something apart ;
Lo, it's the supreme consciousness
Of God Himself.
It's deemed as mind
Only when it carries doubts and resolves :
When this oscillation ceases
It is esteemed as the Knowledge supreme.
Itself ceasing, if transmuted into intuition,
It is honoured as Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna."

Thus the mind itself can be the supreme Knowledge of God. When it frees itself from resolves and doubts, it becomes a great knowledge and a great power. Through that power the seeker attains to the ultimate goal. Mahādēviyakka also states that the mind, not subject to the control of the senses, when yoked to the service of Cennamallikārjuna, can tear off the noose of worldly life :

"Even as the sun is the seed
For motions of the world,
So the mind is for senses seed.
The mind I have is one :
When that is lost in Thee,
O Cenna Mallikārjuna,
Could I be born again ?"

How to attain this? How to focus the mind at point? They do not recommend austere asceticism, restrain the traffic of mind artificially. Asceticism does not mean forgoing all objects of life and turning your back upon them. One should experience them but therethrough one must realise their worthlessness and free oneself from their bondage. Certain souls there may be who, without being caught in the grip of these, have leaped up like bright stars. But if that becomes the only way of spiritual pursuit, it goes beyond the reach of many a seeker, becomes a morsel that cannot be swallowed, a treasure in the mirror. But the path laid down by the Śaraṇas is one which moves step by step.

The seeker's mind cannot withdraw itself from the lures of the world and instinctive hankerings after sensual pleasure at one bound. The senses insist upon their gratification. The more you try to check them the more virulent they become. By overstraining the senses one cannot attain one-pointed concentration. Listen to the sage counsel of Siddharāma :

"If the devotee's heart is won
By a woman, he should wed her.
If the devotee's heart is won
By land, he should buy it and have a home.
If the devotee's heart is won
By gold, he must earn it by strife,
O Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna."

If you merely look upon woman, money and land as lures of Māyā, lust for them grows to huge proportions and plagues you. But when one possesses them and conquers their lure and the covetousness of the mind, or "When he enjoys what comes unbidden to his hand by offering it to God," the three do not become fetters. Basavanna voices the same opinion :

"Bridling your senses, all you do
Is startling maladies :
For the five senses come and stand
And laugh into your face !
Did Siriyāḷa and Caṅgala
Give up their nights of love

As wedded man and wife ?
Did Sindhu Ballāḷa give up
His amorous pleasures and his dalliance ?
Before Thee I avow :
Should I but covet another's wealth or wife,
Let me be banished from Thy feet,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

We must have the delight of senses, no doubt, but through legitimate ways, and make the senses realise the limits of joy. Thus restraint of the senses must become an automatic and effortless state. It should not be an artificial coercion of the senses. Without accomplishing this state, straining of body and toiling of mind are of no use. Toṇṭada Siddhaliṅgēśvara also claims : "To control the senses and cabin the pleasures and fetter the soul is as good as self-treachery". He means that, unless the impurity of mind is washed off, worldly life does not cease if you merely wither up your body.

Their Teaching

Just as there is finality of thought in their views expressed in respect of the individual pursuit, in their teaching, too, we find an independent power of thinking and a catholic bent of mind.

The nature of the social problems that the seeker is to face today may differ from that of the age of the Śaraṇas ; yet, the vital problems remain the same. Since the vacanas of the Śaraṇas deal with those vital problems, they have transcended the limits of time and place and carry a message of enduring interest. One may meet, here and there, with details pertaining to their particular tradition and persuasion. But the major portion of their teaching deals with the whole of humanity.

The range of their teaching extends from the troubled anguish of the human heart to know "What is the ultimate purpose of human existence ? What is the value of Man ?", to the perfect seer who has accomplished the final goal of life. They have given voice to the stirrings of their own heart, the problems they encountered, and the path they have found out,

so that their teaching proved a light unto others. What we notice in their teaching is not a vain pedantic display but the revealed word coming from the heart of the mystic in quest of truth. That is why they go directly to the heart of the seeker.

Every human being must ask, at one time or another, what the aim of his or her life is. The thousand incidents and events that are taking place before his eye every day compel him, in one way or another, to self-introspection. Some inner voice vibrates to the effect that all this worldly traffic is not enduring. Only when man, without turning a deaf ear to that voice, attempts to mould his life in harmony with it, does his life attain fulfilment. If, on the other hand, he, remaining deaf to that voice, finds his life's purpose in indulging in 'food, sex and sleep' only, there would be no difference at all between him and the brutes in the jungle. Nay, he would be even worse than they. Note how Basavanna has given expression to this truth beautifully :

"A rabbit that a huntsman brings,
They pay for it the proper price ;
But none will give a betel-nut
For a dead ruler of the land !
A man's life is less worth
Than a rabbit's, see !
Do you, then, put your trust
In Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama !"

Thus, even a king's life would be worse than that of a rabbit if he leads the life of a brute as if his body were himself. But if he lives true to the kindred spirit within, he soars higher than the 'Paśupati,' or God Himself. There is only one way to accomplish this. Basavanna counsels, "Trust not merely your body. But trust the Lord, Kūḍala Saṅgama, who is the highest Power governing all this seeming traffic."

It means, in brief, that so long as man is absorbed only in the outward struggle, he is at the level of the brutes. Let him by all means struggle to gratify his food instinct, like the brutes. This is essential for his body's existence. But he is not a mere brute. There is something which transcends food and other

necessities of life. That is why an altogether different way has been given him to gratify his basic desires which are akin to those of the beasts. However, after the gratification of those desires, he longs for higher and still higher modes of joy. Then only does his status as man rise correspondingly. Hence he should not forget himself in these sensual pleasures, believing that this saṁsāra itself is the be-all and end-all of his existence here :

"What you call life
Is a wind-blow lamp ;
What you call wealth
Is a market crowd.
Do not, relying on this—
This wealth—destroy your life !
Do not forget to adore
Our Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama !

—affirms Basavanna regarding the evanescence of saṁsāra.

Noticing how man, like "a dedicated sheep brought for a festival, nibbles the tender leaves meant for the festoon," and like "a frog caught in a serpent's mouth, who, hungry, pines for a flitting fly," unaware of the imminent perils, is caught in an error that this sensual pleasure itself is permanent; and how he chases after this world "like a dog licking a sword's sharp edge for ghee," Basavanna admonishes him :

"Shun, Man, this mortal greed....
The splendour of the moonlit night
Will never stay ; the only power
That does not perish, is
Not to forget to adore
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama !"

In Basavanna's words of advice we observe how his heart quivers with compassion for the good of common men and women. There is in them neither a commanding tone of authority nor the disdainful voice of derision at people's ignorance. Just the compassionate heart of a bhakta, touched with pity. It is as if his heart grieved that "all these people waste

themselves away not knowing the real path," and found its utterance in the form of vacanas.

Even a condemned scoundrel for whom all roads of amelioration are closed can find a haven of redemption in the ocean of his mercy:

"Man, O man, you who sin the sin,
Man, O man, you who slay the saint,
Do say but once 'I bow' !...
If you once say 'I bow,'
All sinning flees away !
The golden mountains will not win
Full penance for your sins :
Do say 'I bow to one—
To our Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama !' "

Hence if the mind is once swayed to the path of humility, even a confirmed sinner will have redemption. Basavanna well knows that sincere and honest repentance of past sins must lead the sinners along the path of virtue to the final attainment of the ultimate goal of life. He, therefore, drew all the fallen and the downtrodden, the destitute and the unfortunate, the sinners and the sufferers, towards his benign presence with soothing words of piety, love and mercy, and gave them strength to live on and confidence in life.

More than the compassion of bhakti, we find in Prabhu's words the splendour of renunciation and the voice of authority that kindles the heart of seeker. We also notice in his vacanas, a daring which urges people—gently at times and poignantly at others—with the sharp edge of a ruthless word, to self-introspection. He lashes with a whip those who, forgetting the aim of their existence but believing the ephemeral to be as enduring as the sun and the moon, roll in slothful slumber :

"A billion died of greed;
Of lust another billion.
Still another billion for
Gold, woman and land ;
But I see none, O Guhēśvara,
Who have died for Thee."

He stirs up those who pursue the fleeting mirth which is just "a grain of delight for an ocean of grief." Condemning our mad act of sacrificing our life's purpose for a 'moment's bait,' he exhorts us :

"How can you know
The Principle, O ye Man,
Who die soon as you're born ?
What would you attain after death ?
Dispel the desires of sense
Before your body perishes,
And rely upon bhakti."

When he speaks of the duties essential for a seeker we find his sharp mind working at its best.

The Śaraṇas preached the insipidity of Saṁsāra in a very convincing manner. They remark : 'In the awful forest of Saṁsāra people suffer having missed their way, toil night and day and have failed to find the Ground ; the terrible disease of Saṁsāra has made them walking corpses.' Hundreds of cares and anxieties flock about them and plague and tease them in several ways and dwarf their lives. This is vividly expressed by Aṁbigara Cauḍayya here :

"(Endless are the cares of life :)
The poor man worries about his food ;
The man that is fed about,
The man who has his clothes,
Worries about economy ;
When he has that, woman is his care ;
Next children are his care ; and when
The children come, to save for them ;
And then the fear of losing what he has saved ;
And when his savings are intact,
He worries about death.
Thus have I seen,
Cauḍayya, the oarsman said,
Men sink in various cares ;
But not a single man whose mind
Is upon Śiva !"

Thus one anxiety or other burns the body as if laid on a pyre. But the world has trusted the pleasures of such a life. It is like the plight of a frog in the shadow of a snake. Hence there is no measure to the loss of one who has believed in it. Mahādēvi, wife of Saint Mārayya, tells us not to trust this life, this stark hallucination, and asks: "How can they know Thee who, being caught up in the vortex of worldly misery, forgetting themselves, claiming as their own the hallucination that is not theirs, roll in such terrific distress?" Another Śaraṇa echoes the same:

"Saṁsāra is not happy;
Not happy is Saṁsāra.
This world as well as the other
Are not happy, not enduring.
The bonds of home and hallucination of land
Are a constant distress.
Forsake desire; why then the infatuation of Saṁsāra
Even after observing those who are born soon to die?
Not permanent is your body.
Knowing that you have come here,
Make ready to go away from here,
If you are to be one with Svatantra Siddhaliṅgeśvara."

This is the first step. Some sort of discontent in the pleasures of the mortal world is inevitable to father the wish for liberation. With this object in view the Śaraṇas first preach the evanescence of life; but not to create despair or disappointment in life. Only when this worldly pleasure is realised to be the source of sorrow, does the mind turn its face upward in quest of a higher or greater joy than the former. To that extent only do the Śaraṇas hold up the impermanence of life. One need not be dissappointed because life is transitory and worthless. It is possible in this life itself to search for an abiding core of truth. Therefore this life is holy and worthwhile and meant for living—saying thus, they create confidence in and zest for life. Basavanna's words are memorable here:

"This mortal world is but the Maker's mint;

Those who earn merit here, earn also there,
And those who earn not here, earn neither there,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord!"

Hence he who cannot live well here, what can he attain hereafter! To live like a walking corpse, with despair and disgust, is not the spiritual way of life but only a passing shadow. Therefore one must live here and live well, and at the same time attain the life of the spirit which is beyond the bournes of this mortal life.

The life here must not become a hurdle in the pursuit of an eternal life. Whatever vocation one might have chosen, and whatever province of life one is found in, one must master and mould it into a voluntary means of one's spiritual pursuit. The spiritual pursuit is open to all. One must have a wish, a will, to undertake it. Mark what Prabhu says here :

"They are neither brave nor resolute
Who cannot ride the ready horse,
Yet ask for another one . . .
Therefore the triple worlds,
O Guhēśvara,
Labour and sweat,
Carrying the saddle on their back !"

It is the true mark of the seeker to mould everything that comes to him in life into a willing instrument of his divine pursuits. Otherwise his will be the flight of a warrior carrying the saddle of a horse on his back instead of riding on it. Irrespective of the walk of life one is placed in, one must have the resoluteness of a warrior and ride the horse of Saṁsāra. Instead of being a slave of the horse, one must be its master. Though living in the mortal Saṁsāra, he must always have an eye upon the immortal Saṁsāra. It must be the hard effort of every saṁsāri to untie the tangled knot which binds body and breath. See how aptly the words of Siddharāma read in this context :

"The swan alone can strain
The water from the milk . . .
Unless you split the blend

Of body and the self,
Sir, how could I?
The knot that you have knit
None else can disentangle;
The knot untied by you
None else can tie again.
O Kapilasiddha Mallinātha,
Do me this charity:
Do you rip open the seam
Between my body and soul!"

Without being smothered by the Saṁsāric pulls and lures or by the touch of its poisonous wind, he must find shelter in the gracious and compassionate look of the holy Guru. "Without toiling in the maddening strife of the mortal world, wasting time and dying out," he must learn from Guru himself the truth that "the holy Guru himself is father, wife and children, kith and kin." It means, in brief, that the path of the seeker does not lie in completely condemning Saṁsāra nor in striving for the sake of wife and children from morning to evening, believing that this is his all. Hence his wisdom lies in conducting the two simultaneously, neither despising the here nor forgetting the hereafter. By such a path, the Śaraṇas insist, the seeker must accomplish his personal advancement as well as the good of society. They also discuss the seeker's individual and social policy, and the specific bent of mind that he should necessarily possess.

"Do unto others as you would be done by" — this is the basic rule that governs all social behaviour. Good and gentle behaviour, freedom from pride, a spirit of equality, humanitarian compassion for others' pains—all these general rules of ethics reveal the culture of man. Mark how Basavanna remonstrates:

"Does it make you ugly if you say
'Come right in, how do you do?'
Does your floor cave in when you say
'Do sit down, please?'
Or does your head, or belly, burst
If only you speak to one?

If you have nothing to give, not even a grace,
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama, be sure,
Will pull you down and chop your nose!"

He insists that, though one may be poor in material possessions, yet one's mind and heart must not be poor. The richer the heart, the greater the height of culture.

"Your gentle speech is worth all counting of beads;
Your gentle speech is all penances;
True modesty is worth Sadāśiva's grace."

Gentle words should not mean feigned words for mere show, but such as spontaneously spring from the bottom of the heart and represent the divine truth within. Thus the Śaraṇas emphasize the exclusive importance of truth and proclaim that love of truth is the fundamental virtue to be necessarily imbibed by the seeker. Basavanna stresses:

"Behold; between the worlds
Of mortals and of gods
There is no difference!
To speak the truth is the world of gods;
To speak untruth, the mortal world.
Good work is Heaven,
Bad work is Hell—
And you can witness it,
O Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama!"

He also adds that 'to speak truth and practise it in action' is the fundamental mantra of the seeker. Prabhu rejoins, "Truth itself is sanctity of character," and remonstrates, "One must not talk with those without truth — not once in a thousand times, not once in a million times, not once in a billion times."

Basavanna asserts that spirituality is not meant to please by talk but to be put into action. He continues that those whose word and deed do not agree are rope-dancers, and their worship would be just a rope-dance. If the deed betrays the word, the Liṅga in the palm itself becomes a deadly snake. It cannot carry us to the other shore through the ocean of Saṁsāra. Listen to his vacana!

"What if you read a hundred books
Or hear a hundred homilies?
Unless your greed is plucked, your anger cease,
What fruit in washing feet?
Our Lord Kuḍala Saṅgama laughs to see
Born liars whose minds
Are not as good as their words!"

If spiritual exercises, like worship and service, are to be fruitful and efficacious, the seeker must wash off the corporal traits and absorb divine properties (Liṅga guṇās). Aṅga means ajñāna, or ignorance, Liṅga means sujñāna, or right knowledge—says Siddharāmayya. The seeker should purge himself of all vices and learn right thought and right practice. "I accept not those without right living and piety; their worship is a penalty indeed!"—tells another Śaraṇa. Mahadeviyakka asks the seeker to be good first and then pour water for the bath:

"When I am good I go and bathe,
And worship only when I'm calm;
And if I sing of Thee, it is
In the last ecstasy of love.
O Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord,
The worship that forever joins
Myself to thee, is my delight!"

Basavanna saying

"Should one in anger pour
The water for the bath, it is
A stream of blood!
Should one who sins offer a flower,
It is a sharpened weapon's wound!"

states that to worship without harbouring vices within, and to pour water for the bath for the sake of formality without waking from the stupor of mind, is all in vain. He further urges, "You must act with all your heart, with all your mind; if you don't, how will Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama love?" Mahādēviyakka endorses the same in what follows:

"Thou wilt not bathe with those
Whose body has not pined away;

Nor yet take flowers from those
Whose mind has not yet pined away,
Nor sandal-paste nor grains of rice
From those who know not love ;
Nor waving light from those
Whose eye of knowledge is yet shut ;
Nor incense from those ones
Whose will is still impure ;
Nor offerings from such as have
No peace within their hearts ;
Nor betel-leaf-and-nut from those
Whose triple senses are unclean ;
Nor wilt Thou stay with such
As have the lotus of their heart
Still rooted in the mire...
Tell me, Cenna Mallikārjuna,
Why Thou should'st come and fill my palm!"

Thus, only when the seeker is pure in body and mind, heart and soul, will and consciousness, shall his offerings attain fulfilment.

Even so, the Śaraṇas mercilessly condemn fraud and theft, greed and violence, wickedness and bad conduct, and give the highest priority to ethics and morality in society. Some of the vacanas in this regard read like the *Sermon on the Mount*; Basavanna urges :

"Thou shalt not steal nor kill ;
Nor speak a lie ;
Be angry with no one ;
Nor scorn another man ;
Nor glory in thyself,
Nor others hold to blame...
This is your inward purity ;
This is your outward purity ;
This is the way to win our Lord
Kūḍala Saṅgama."

Śaṇmukhasvāmi supports :

"To the true devotees—

Who repeat at every step
The words 'Śiva Śiva,' without fail,
Without harshness in speech,
Without sloth in deed,
Not forsaking the undertaken bhakti to the end,
Not being tarnished with care
When poverty, odds and ordeals are encountered—
Our Akhaṇḍēśvara grants whatever they seek."

Every stipulation that is demanded of the sādhaka in this vacana he must ruminate in his mind slowly and thoroughly. Similarly, Urilińga Peddi repeats almost the same counsel :

"When the body harbours passions—
Lust and anger, greed and infatuation
Jealousy and pride, hate and love—
When hate and love go and come—
There is no purport in mere talk of advaita
That 'I am Brahma.'
Trust and know the ocean of felicity,
The Viśveśvara dear to Urilińga Peddi."

The following vacana of Śivaleńka Mancanna on ethical practices is worthy of notice :

"Not to accept another's pelf is an observance ;
Not to covet another's wife in lust is a sanctity.
To observe non-violence to all life is an undertaking ;
To know truth from myth is a permanent vow.
This is an observance, beyond doubt,
For Īśaṇamūrti Mallikārjuna Liṅga."

We notice in this vacana the principal elements stressed by the Śaraṇas in several ways. The first one is, 'not to accept another's money.' Even in charity work and philanthropy, the Śaraṇas insist, the money to be gifted must come from the true and pure kāyaka, or dedicated work. Thus they expounded the importance, the urgency and the dignity of kāyaka.

The seeker undertakes the kāyaka, or dedicated work, not with an over-weening presumption that he requires every-

thing exclusively for himself. The greed itself is a bondage. Siddharāmayya thinks loudly : "When shall I be free from the culprit, greed, and be one with Thee in integral union !" and adds, "Tnis greed bruises everybody and maims their body and mind." Prabhu exposes persons who pose as venerable men and yet are slaves to greed :

"Planting the carcass of hypocrisy
On greed the gallows, these great ones of earth
Look, how they wore themselves away !
Seeing the great ones strut about, into hell
Flaunting their greed, Guhēśvara felt disgust :
Mark it, Saṅgana Basavanna !

Another Śaraṇa exhorts :

"What shall I say of the loss
That all, bewitched by a witch,
Called greed, have encountered ?
Let them be monks or students of Veda,
Hermits or pundits versatile in all arts,
Let them be men or gods—
She made them all watch
The gates of the rich.
There is none but is lured by her.
She holds you by the ear and makes
All but Śaraṇas dance to her,
O Nijaguru Svatantra Siddhaliṅgēśvara!"

All, irrespective of their learning, vocation or position in life, ruin themselves if they dance to her tune. Some other Śaraṇas make similar observations :

"He who has greed
Will be subordinate to others ;
He who knows the apex
Of his greedy mind,
Assures our oarsman Caudayya,
Abides beyond the reach of Kailāsa."

"As long as greed persists
One cannot but rely on others,

Such a greed is irksome,
Greed itself is serfdom,
Freedom from greed is lordship,
To weigh the odds between the two
And remain free from greed
Is lordship indeed, O Uriliṅga
Peddipriya Viśveśvara!"

Thus greed enervates the will-power of the soul and leads to serfdom, so caution the Śaraṇas.

What is known as greed applies not merely to the expression, 'Not to accept another's money', but also to 'Not to covet another's wife'. Gold, woman and land are not, by themselves, baits of Māyā; yet the greedy mind that hankers after them turns out to be the greatest Māyā. Celibacy or chastity, which controlling lust, reveres all women, as Mahādēvi herself, is indispensable to the seeker. He may not fear the streaking snake, the tongue of flame, the point of sword. But he must fear one thing — the other woman. Basavanna exhorts :

"Look you ! refuse
To give the glad eye to another's wife,
Or even to speak to her :
It is, look you, as if a dog
Tore at a wether's back !
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Will for a single wish plunge you into hell
For a thousand years !

The words of Soḍḍaḷa Bācarasa are also worthy of notice in this context :

"Hanker not after another's wife,
O Mind,
Having seen the loins you have come through
And the breast you have sucked at,
Pine not, O Mind.
The shameless profligates
Who indulge in unbridled insolence —
Does our Soḍḍaḷa Dēvarāya
Ever fail to cast into the hell of worms ?"

The Śaraṇas do not despise married life after a legitimate wedding, provided it does not become indulgence in lust. Beyond that, "the Bhakti of the couple being one is dear to Śiva." They insist that the householder's stage of life must be conducive to spiritual pursuits.

"To observe non-violence toward all life is a vow," is another rule laid down by Śivaleṅka Mancaṇṇa. It is a precept of great importance in religious pursuits. "Mercy is the root of religion," enunciated Basavanna. Compassion to life is the basis of religion. It brings with it generosity of heart, which can find the Divine power and presence in all things and all lives.

"Wherefore should I hold a sword ?
What should I draw and pierce ?
As the whole world is Thyself
O Rāmanātha."

When God is omnipresent, whom shall I kill ? asks Dāsimayya :

"A fisherman, casting a net,
Captures the leaping wealth of the tide
And dances with joy.
Wherefore doth he weep not for them
As he does for his babe that is no more ?"—

asks Mahādēviyakka. The Śaraṇas lament the death of a dumb creature as they mourn for their dead children. So tender and tremulous was their heart.

"To know truth from myth is a permanent vow", is the fourth injunction. The seeker, who is armed with all moral equipment, must, discriminating between truth and untruth, be able to know the real nature of life. This itself is the real vow. All other ethical observances enumerated so far are only aids to it. Only when the art of knowing the nature of the mortal as well as the immortal is mastered that all those observances bear fruit.

The seeker has often to encounter on his spiritual path hundreds of problems connected with the inner workings of the soul, as well as the slander and censure of society. Under such circumstances, the seeker primarily needs his mental poise,

"Whoever may say whatever he will, to remain the same as before is equanimity or mental poise," defines Siddharāmayya. He further adds, "When a thoughtless man lays a weapon on his head, let me worship him with sandal-paste and rice-grains," and pray for such equanimity as will remain unruffled in joy as well as in imminent death. Basavanna's self-possession is amazing :

"Those who belabour me I deem
My benefactors ; those who abuse
My brothers ; those who censure me
My father and my mother ; those
Who swindle me I deem my masters ;
Those who deride me I regard
As my true kin ; but those who flatter me
Are, O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
Such as would set me up
On gallows wrought of gold !"

When people censure us, we must welcome it as a means of purging our mind of its sins. In that sense, flatterers are our real foes. "As they reap what they sow," those who censure him will reap the fruit of their Karma. But the seeker must march on without being elated by flattery or cowed down by disdain. The words of Mahādēviyakka in this regard are memorable :

"If, having built your house upon a peak,
You live in dread of savage beasts,
How will it be ?
If, having made your home upon a beach,
You fear the froth and foam,
How will it be ?
If, having built your house in the bazaar,
You blush at every word,
How will it be ?
Pray hearken unto me,
Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord,
If, being born upon this earth,
Or praise or scorn should be our lot,

We should be calm, not let a thought
Of anger penetrate our heart !"

Ups and downs, joy and pain, anger and grief—all disturb the poise of mind. Anger burns the body like the fire that burns the house where it is kindled. Mark what Basavanna remarks in this connection :

"Why, Sir, be angry with those
Who're angry with you ?
What does it mean to you,
Or what their loss ?
To show one's anger means
A loss of dignity ;
To feel it, loss of sense !
The conflagration in your home
But burns your house—
Does it burn your neighbour's house,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord ?"

Hence the seeker must take every precaution against anger so that it should not ruffle the serenity of his heart and upset the balance of his mind.

For inward poise, purity of heart is the first requisite. The seeker's 'within' as well as 'without' must be invariably pure and ūnsullied. The two must become one and identical. Basavanna admonishes :

"With fraud within and modesty without,
They are the so-called holy men :
Liṅga says No !
They do not reach at all
The path of righteousness.
Kūḍala Saṅgama,
Lord of the universe,
Unmasks the vile desires
Of those who are not one
Within and without,
And casts them off."

Another vacanakāra repeats the same opinion :

"What if the impure in heart
Follow right practice and do
Right work without, just to please
The public eye ?
It's only a public entertainment,
Śiva cannot like it."

Their mind is as a wild fig :

"The heart of the impure man
Is as a wild fig
Which clings to its filth,
But the conscience of the pure in heart
Like a plantain yields
Nothing but good.
The Śaraṇas should not be,
Therefore, in the company
Of the impure of heart."

Purity of heart leads to peace of mind and serenity of heart, which in its turn brings about firmness and fulfilment. The worship of one who is not resolute in mind is of no avail. Only if you invoke God with one-pointed faith will He respond to your call. No empty call of no faith or little faith will touch him. Basavanna reveals his own plight :

"How longsoever a stone
May lie in water, can it
By soaking turn soft ?
However long I worship Thee,
What boots it, if I lack
A resolute mind ?
My plight is like a spirit's
Guarding a treasure-trove,
O Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama !"

Irrespective of favour or fortune, without welcoming the one nor despising the other, the bhakta must trust Śiva and none but Him. He subjects the bhakta to many hardships and distresses. He tests him by rubbing and paring, beating and cutting, sawing and flaying. If the bhakta remains undaunted by all these, Basavanna says, "Our Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama is tremulous for

bhakti." Like the sandalwood that gives only sweet smell though chopped and rubbed, like a piece of gold that shines all the more if it is cut or refined in fire, like a stalk of sugarcane that gives out sweet juice even when it is cut and crushed, the seeker must patiently withstand all intolerable pains and calamities and give out the perfume of virtue. God trembles with pity and compassion for a bhakta who affirms with a single-pointed faith, "Even if you kill me, never shall I cease to cry hail, O hail to Thee." If such a bhakta dwells in the heart of the forest, that forest will be transformed into a city; a bhakta without faith, on the other hand, even if he stays in a city, it turns into a jungle. Therefore, the seeker must have a firm and unflinching faith in his undertaking and an adamantine perseverance in his efforts to accomplish it. All these must be devoted to divine ends, not for worldly objects. Thus the bhakta needs perseverance :

"The Śaraṇa must have the constancy to say,
'I will not have another's wealth' ;
The Śarana must have the constancy to say,
'I will not have another's wife' ;
The Śaraṇa must have the constancy to say,
'I will not have another's God' ;
The Śaraṇa must have the constancy to say,
'Liṅga and Jaṅgama are one' ;
The Śaraṇa must have the constancy to say,
'Prasāda is the Truth' ;
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama disdains
Such men as have no constancy."

Thus when the seeker has a firm will and resolute faith in his heart and a virtuous way of life, his mind attains one-pointedness and finds light. Otherwise, as Basavanna points out, the initial ardour gradually ebbs and a wavering devotion never carries him to the other shore :

"Look, brothers : in the course of time,
Devotion was reduced to half !
Look, brothers : the first day,

The touching of the brow,
The second, touching of the hand,
The third, a listless nod !
If you persist
In what you have begun,
He'll sink you in midstream !
Our Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Will lead you to your goal."

Love of God without expectation of reward can alone nourish such a resolute bhakti. As Basavanna suggests, love of truth alone is the core of bhakti :

"A worship without love
And an unfeeling act,
Behold, my brothers, is
A pictured loveliness
(No joy in its embrace),
A painted sugarcane
(No relish in its taste).
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
Without sincerity
It is no piety."

But that love should not be conditioned by any desire. If it expects worldly rewards, it cannot be regarded as genuine bhakti. It is only a base bhakti. With the accomplishment of the desired ends, it withers out. But real bhakti is devoid of any desire ; it is only a 'desireless love'. Without expecting anything in return, it sürrenders its all, and rises to absolute dedication of self.

"When once the body is Thine own,
I have no body apart ;
When once the mind belongs to Thee,
I have no mind apart ;
When once wealth is Thine own,
I have no wealth apart.
When once I know these three

Are Thine, is there for me
Another thought apart,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord ?"

"Body is become naught
For it is given over ;
Mind is become naught
For it is given over ;
Pelf is become naught
For it is given over ;
As the triple's given over thus
In Kūḍala Cennasaṅgayya
Basavanna's attained space-trance."

The two vacanas indicate the Śaraṇa's complete surrender to God. By surrendering the three to Him, and thereby resigning the very idea of them, one should establish God on the altar of one's heart and worship Him, the Lord of the spiritual realm. Through such worship alone does one's sense of ego cease to be, and the spirit of 'dasoha', or 'I am Thy slave', gradually grows to its fullness. The Śaraṇas assert that this is the real path of the seeker.

The Śaraṇas have repeatedly stressed that eradication of the ego is a very essential stage in the path of the seeker. As the sense of 'I' is being annihilated, the Divine grace descends to the heart more and more. So long as the one clings to us the other does not attract us. Prabhu, in saying "It is my fault if I should eat from pride of what I am....", has shown how the sense of ego becomes the source of all ruin. He further describes its play :

"When the pride of I and You
Peeps its head,
The storm of fraud, deceit
And dishonesty breaks out ;
At the break of storm the light
Of knowledge is extinguished ;
At the loss of knowledge
Many a big pedant who brags,

'I know, I'm learned,'
Ruined himself beyond measure
Being shrouded in sloth, O Guheśvara !"

"When one becomes an ascetic once,
One must be absolutely free from ego,
Like the wind that has hugged a withered tree ;
Like the peaks and tree-tops drowned in the sea ;
Like the mute who has seen a dream."

--exhort the Śaraṇas. Now mark how Cennabasavanna distinguishes body from non-body :

"They talk of body and non-body,
But they know not its key.
To say 'I' is body,
To say 'I am a slave' is non-body.
As it is said :
'Bhakta's body is non-body'
I call them non-bodied
In Kūḍala Cennasaṅgayya,
Who have annihilated their ego."

Thus he stresses the importance of non-body.

Thus the Śaraṇas have given an overriding prominence to the spirit of 'I am Thy slave'. If the seeker imposes on himself the Godhead, in the belief that 'he is that' and 'he is Śiva', his pursuit cannot be perfect. If one is to attain to Godhead, one must completely eradicate the pride of 'I' through dāsōha, or unreserved self-surrender. Otherwise, the 'sōhaṁ' becomes the inner pride and Śivōhaṁ the outer pride. When one, destroying these dichotomies, earns by the exertion of body and mind in humility and surrenders what he earns to Guru, Liṅga and Jaṅgama, one's body, mind and heart become pure and all turns holy. Basavanna says about dāsōha :

When bhakta comes to bhakta's house,
He must behave as servant would :
If he should ask to wash his feet,
As though he were the lord,
His past devotion is a waste !

A hundred thousand leagues, to see
A bhakta is meritorious deed ;
And if, together, they perform
The lowliest service, then indeed
Our Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Shall take them to his heart !"

"Let me not pass from birth to birth,
Let me not utter 'I am He,'
But only 'Thy servant I'.
Show me the worth
Of Liṅga's and Jaṅgama's grace
And let me live,
I pray Thee, Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

If a bhakta assumes that the pride in himself is the master, that is his fall, his defeat and his annihilation. A bhakta should go a million miles to see another bhakta and honour him in a spirit of self-surrender.

The seeker attains an imperishable position through a spirit of absolute humility. As Basavanna puts it, "As imperishable is Thy Lordship, so my servitorship too is imperishable." Even to be a slave of the imperishable Lord leads the seeker to an imperishable position.

The spirit of humility in the seeker is his highest position. It expects no other reward. It is itself to become the reward. In such a state, the awareness of humility too withers into spontaneity. Basavanna cautions :

"If but the thought of doing well
Flashes into my mind,
God's laughter haunts me like a bell
Down the wind."

Thus, the seeker must act without being aware of it.

Prabhu, going to Siddharāma, who was absorbed in Karmayoga, made him realise the truth of this fact. Delineating this situation in *Prabhuliṅga Lile* Cāmarasa asks at the end :

"Where did they vanish—where—
Siddharāma's pride, infatuation
In outward deed and greed for fame ?"

Work done by the sādhaka at such a height does not constitute fetters. We see the seeker here who, converting his acts into steps of his ascent, rises from a state of active participation in life to one of complete abstinence. The Śaraṇas preached and demonstrated the way of attaining to that height.

In brief, the Śaraṇa thought and teaching regarding the individual and his ways of attainment embody lofty truths which humanity, wherever it be, must put into practice. They practised all those truths in their own daily life, and gave utterance to their experience in words that went direct to the hearts of their hearers. As Siddharāma puts it :

"What is teaching ?
Is it breathing into the ear
And telling a mantra ?
No, no ; teaching means :
In the triple body—you're the
Witness, the Supreme Thing—
This is the real teaching
Mark, O Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna."

For man to realise his own self, is alone the real teaching. The great purpose that governs all the words of the Śaraṇas is that all their teaching must lead us towards that sublime height of Self-realisation.

Structure of Society

Society is constituted of individuals and is meant to foster the growth and development of the individual. Through the co-operation of the whole the good of the part is accomplished, while in the achievement of individuals society finds its guidance. So the part and the whole are mutually interdependent and supplement each other. In the Śaranas' study of society there is a harmonious union of the two.

On several occasions society has come to face a situation where disharmony and disparity between the two prevails. Instead of helping an individual to fulfil his basic aims and urges, society lays hurdles in his way and puts a brake on his progress. An artificial division of society based on a limited

outlook of life is the cause of this. To remedy this wrong, a correct vision that can see life steadily and see it whole is essential. We notice that the Śaraṇas, who saw life with an integral and large outlook, stand isolated, resenting the artificial barriers that barred the progress of an individual in their time.

The chief among such barriers is the caste system. Whatever the origin of the fourfold caste system and whatever the governing principle behind it, by the time of the Śaraṇas, it had already taken a perverse turn. It had broken the society into several divisions. Added to the four castes, viz., Brāhmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiṣya and Śūdra, a fifth, that of untouchables, proclaimed to the world the blot that clung to the Hindu religion. The ideal laid down by Krishna in the *Bhagavadgīā*, "The fourfold order was created by Me according to the divisions of quality and work. Though I am its creator, know Me to be incapable of action or change," had vanished long long ago. On the contrary, those who had assumed that they were of higher birth had made religion their personal property, as it were, and cheated the common man of the true religion. In many a way, religion was used as a means of selfish exploitation. Radically protesting against such selfish practices, the Śaraṇas, through the strength and vitality of their own spiritual discipline, illumined the true nature of religion. The following vacana of Basavanna is a perfect illustration of the rationalism of the Śaraṇas :

"A pariah is the man who slays,
A pariah, if he eats the carrion :
Where is the caste here—where ?
Our Kūḍala Saṅga's Śaraṇa,
Who loves all living things,
He is the well-born one !"

Man's worth should not be judged by his birth, but by his thoughts and deeds, his conduct and character—proclaimed Basavanna. The same truth is more explicitly expressed by Siddharāmayya :

"What if he read and teach the Vēda ?
Could he become a Brahmin ?

What if he is born of the Vēdāntin's blood and seed ?
Could he become a Brahmin ?
What if he perform eight sacrifices and six Karmas ?
Could be become a Brahmin ?
He is the Brahmin, O Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna,
Who abides in Brahman,
Knowing the Vēda doctrine—
'He who knows Brahma is the Brahmin'. "

"One is a Brahmin who knows Brahma, and a cobbler one who kills all beings and yields to Karma" ; those alone who know the Supreme Principle are true-born. This fact is beautifully expressed by Devara Dāsimayya :

"Did a woman's soul
Have breast and braid ?
Did the priest's soul
Have a sacred thread ?
Did the lowly born, the lowest,
Hold a broom in his soul ?
How can the fools of the world
Know the knot knit by Thee,
O Rāmanātha Lord ? "

The spirit within the body knows neither the difference of male and female nor that of master and servant. The high-born is never born with his caste-mark, nor the low-born with his trade-mark, the broom. The low-born might have undertaken service as a means of existence in life's struggle. But if he advances in the right way of living, he can become the true-born, the high-born ; if he fall from his path, a pariah. The same view is also voiced by Mādara Cennayya :

" When there is concord between word and deed,
There's neither high nor low ;
But when the word is fine and the deed bad,
Ay, then there is the rub !
Then you behave amiss,
Ignoring where the pathway leads
Of unheard-of lowliness,

Of theft and of adultery.
How, then, can you possess
The body of a well-born man?
Good conduct is high caste,
Misconduct low; you must
Grasp the significance of these two,
Nor sink below the cobbler's knife and last:
Mark that, Nijātmarāma!"

The Śaraṇas not only proclaimed the principle that virtue is purity and vice filth, but also practised it in their daily life.

This is a revolutionary practice indeed. More especially, eight hundred years ago its reaction upon the society can be imagined. Had the Śaraṇas merely proclaimed this principle and kept quiet, may be the reactionary forces would have ignored it. But the Śaraṇas practised what they proclaimed. The very untouchables, whom the high-born had kept at a distance and a look at whom had to be followed by a purificatory bath, Basavaṇṇa, himself one of the high-born, enlisted in the religio-mystic Academy set up by him. He gave them also an equal status in religion and society:

"Shall I call Siriyāḷa a man of trade,
And Mācayya a washerman?
Call Kakkayya a tanner, and
Cennayya a scavenger?
And if I call myself
A priest, will not
Kūḍala Saṅgama just laugh at me?"

Thus he suggested that they all surpassed him in bhakti. Consequent upon this he had to face terrible opposition from reactionary forces. When he went, judged by the standards of his day, to the extreme length of bringing about a matrimonial relationship between the son of Haraḷayya, a tanner, and the daughter of Madhuvarasa, a Brahmin girl, the reactionary forces got the upper hand in spite of Basavaṇṇa being the Prime Minister. They raised a hue and cry against him and the other Śaraṇas and complained to the King that inter-caste marriage was a confusion of castes and hence a sacrilege. King Bijjaḷa,

in the name and for the protection of religion, passed a severe sentence that Haraḷayya and Madhuvarasa be tied to an elephant's legs and dragged till they died. The entire city of Kalyana was shaken by this sudden turn of events.

At this valiant enterprise of Basavaṇṇa the heart of the traditionalists of our own day may quake. Nevertheless, we of the Gandhian Age are now in a position to appreciate such bold innovations. But the society of the day could not stand it. Basavanna may be said to have been eight-hundred years ahead of his time. His acts and decisions are welcome to us today. The path laid down by Basavaṇṇa and the Śaraṇas, his contemporaries, in respect of the removal of untouchability and abolition of caste is to us today a guiding light.

The Śaraṇas were disgusted to see not merely these castes but also hundreds of subcastes and the wrangles among them. In the eyes of the Śaraṇas there are only two classes in the human species—the good and the mean by nature. Mādara Cennayya deprecated the existence of too many castes, saying—"Among the various castes there are only two—the good and the bad; there are no other than these." Again he reiterates:

> "Semen and blood, flesh and marrow,
> Hunger and thirst, vice and sense—
> Are the only difference.
> Many are the works you do,
> But the appearance that seems
> And the soul that knows—the only difference.
> Whichever be the caste,
> Only when you know you're possessed
> Of the Supreme principle;
> When you forget, you' are bound to impure Māyā."

The last remark is memorable. He further stresses his stand, on the score of example of sages and seers, that caste cannot be a criterion for the worth of a man:

> "Sāṅkhya was a sweeper;
> Agastya, a huntsman;
> Dūrvāsa, a cobbler;
> Dadhīci, a locksmith;

Kāśyapa, a blacksmith ;
Romaja, a copper-smith ;
Kauṇḍilya, a barber ;
So, why should you, then,
In ignorance of this,
Insist on caste ? "

Thus he condemns all who insist on the existence of caste.

The Śaraṇas do not accept or uphold discrimination of caste in the exchange of food and clothes, in marriage and in all other affairs of life. These are, they say, artificial divisions. These, instead of bringing members of the society closer and closer, widen the gulf between man and man and isolate them from one another. Prabhu has given vivid expression to this :

" He who comes not to dinner
Would be alien to food ;
He who has become alien to food
Would be alien to the house ;
He who has become alien to the house
Would be alien to mind ;
He who has become alien to mind
Would become alien to the
Divine experience of Guhēśvara."

He further suggests that these castes develop the tendency in individuals who keep away from others, to cut off their contacts and relations further and to form more and more social groups. Basavanna remonstrates :

" They say they break their vows
In eating and in wearing clothes :
They look for caste
Whenever they arrange a match.
How can you call them devotees ?
How can you call them adepts too ?
Hearken to me, Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
It's like a low-born wife
Bathing in water that is pure ! "

Now it is noticed that society has advanced to the extent of following Basavanna's advice in respect of free exchange of food and other formalities. But to arrange matrimonial relationships on the strength of character and right way of living alone without bothering about caste and other things pertaining thereto, even the society of our own day is not yet prepared ; then what of the society of eight hundred years ago ? The Śaraṅas spread such ideas of a revolutionary but catholic nature in the society and actually implemented them.

The great object of the Śaraṇas was to build up an ideal society which would be able to judge the worth of man on the strength of character rather than on class, and provide equal opportunities to all. With this object in view they tried their utmost to bring about an awakening in the minds of the people. Primarily, they had to change the prevailing social attitude of deciding the worth of a man by his life's vocation or profession. An individual must have an opportunity for self-advancement, irrespective of his vocation in life. His vocation should not be a bar to his pursuits and progress. There is nothing like high and low in occupation. it is in the bent of mind that undertakes it. The Śaraṇas proclaimed that only when an occupation transforms itself into a kāyaka, or dedicated work, does it cease to be a bar to progress in spiritual discipline.

The term 'kāyaka', or the divinity of labour, is the Śaraṇas' gift to the world of thought. The extent of connotation they have seen in this term is capable of universal application. Every one must do some work or other. No idle person has any authority to exploit another's labour and be a parasite. The renunciation of an idle fellow is no renunciation at all. Sakalēśa Mādarasa condemns the drones who parade themselves in the guise of ascetics :

"Not prepared to work
Owing to bodily sloth, O Lord,
Rather than look for food they starve ;
Unable to procure clothes for the body
They wear loin-cloth, O Lord !

Unable to procure oil for their bath
They shave their heads, O Lord !
I fear those, O Sakalēśvara, Lord,
Who, not knowing to resolve it in truth,
Uphold the myth of saṁsāra."

Renunciation does mean being led by frustration to live somehow and feed the belly. One must work and live well. But one must overcome one's selfishness and not claim the reward exclusively for oneself. Without living exclusively for oneself, one must learn to live for the good of others as well. One must expend the fruit of one's labour in the spirit of dāsōha—that one is just a servant in the scheme of the phenomenal world. Only then will work become kāyaka, or holy work and worship. Basavanna worked as Prime Minister to Bijjaḷa, but not to amass wealth for himself. Solemnly declaring in the name of God, Basavanna gives the reasons why he accepted service under Bijjaḷa :

"If rising at dawn and rubbing my eyes,
I worry for my belly, for my goods,
For wife and children, then
My mind be witness to my mind !
They say, 'Basavanna reads the text which says :
He who sits, sleeps and walks
And interdines with them shall go
For endless time to a terrific hell ;
But, sitting below the throne
Of a worldling like Bijjala, serves him'.
So say the pioneers. To them
I answer, for I can...
If going into the lowest pariah's house,
I do the lowest service well,
My one concern is but Thy Majesty ;
But if I worry for my belly's sake,
Let my head pay for it,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

Thus, any work that is undertaken for the world's good shall be worship, or kāyaka. It is only in this sense that the Śaraṇas

say, 'kāyaka, or dedicated work, is Paradise'. Such an ideal presented by Basavanna and other Śaraṇas, will be more intelligible to our age when attempts are being made to enhance the dignity and importance of labour through slogans like 'Work is Worship' and 'the gift of labour'. The same remains an imperishable ideal for our modern venture of building up a welfare society.

If a society is to become a happy and self-sufficient unit, Śaraṇas emphasize, all who form its constituent parts must work hard and realise the importance of kāyaka, or holy work. They have severely condemned begging. In their eyes, living under the obligation of others as parasites is no living at all. Basavanna emphatically states, "When I meet the real Śaraṇas who seek not to live on others, veritably I look upon them as Kūḍala Saṅga Himself." Let one be a bhakta or Guru or a Jaṅgama—if he is a parasite on others, the Śaraṇas despise him. All must pursue their spiritual progress through their kāyaka. This is how Nuliya Candayya reveals the worth and necessity of kāyaka :

"Though you be Guru, only through work
You save yourself while still alive ;
Though you be Liṅga, only through work
You can efface the story sign ;
Though you be Jaṅgama, only through work
You can pluck off the bonds
Your garb imposes upon you.
Though you be Guru, you must serve Jaṅgama ;
Though you be Linga, you must serve Jaṅgama ;
Even though you be Jaṅgama himself,
Still you must serve Jaṅgama.
Hark you, Prabhu, that is to know
Candeēsvaraliṅga !"

He was a ropemaker. He advanced in his divine pursuit through his kāyaka. Even so, one must note other Śaraṇas, like Maḍivāḷa Mācayya (a washerman), Mēdara Kētayya (a basket-maker), Haḍapada Appaṇṇa (a barber), Ambigara Caudayya (an oarsman), Turugāhi Rāmaṇṇa (a cowherd),

Suṅkada Baṅkaṇṇa (a toll-keeper), Mādara Cennayya (a pariah), Taḷavāra Kāmidēva (a village watchman), Gāṇada Kaṇṇappa (an oilman), Vidyā Saṅgaṇṇa (an ayurvedist), Sūjikāyakada Rāmitande (a tailor), Bācikāyakada Basappa (a carpenter), Koṭṭaṇada Remmavve (a paddy pounder), Mōlige Mārayya (a hewer of wood). The words prefixed to their names suggest the kāyaka each had undertaken. Thus the Śaraṇas who were following vocations like grazing cattle, plying boats, washing clothes, running an oil-mill, making shoes and so forth, could sit in equal rank with Basavaṇṇa in the Anubhava Maṇṭapa, or Religio-mystic Academy, and daily participate in its deliberations. Basavanna had then accomplished a reformation which is not completely effected even today.

The Anubhava Maṇṭapa was an assembly of Mystics. What was going on there was not an investigation into the traditional dogmas recorded in the Śāstras. They discussed the doubts which cropped up and the problems met with in the course of their spiritual pursuit, on the basis of their individual experience. Let us take up an incldent as an instance.

Once a certain problem regarding kāyaka crops up in the deliberations of the Anubhava Maṇṭapa. Āyadakki Mārayya was responsible for it. To gather rice-grains scattered in front of Bāsava's Great House was his kāyaka. He asks Prabhu, who is presiding over the deliberations of the Anubhava Maṇṭapa, "When it is said that kāyaka is Kailāsa, or holy work is Paradise, why the need of Guru, Liṅga and Jaṅgama at all?"

> "One who's engaged in work
> Must even forget the Guru's sight;
> The Liṅga-worship he must forget...
> Even if the Jaṅgama stand in front,
> The obligation must be snapped.
> Since such work is as good as Heaven,
> Amarēśvaraliṅga Himself
> Is found in it."

If everything can be accomplished through kāyaka, what is the need of the threefold dāsōha, or dedication?—That is his doubt; and indeed, when the full connotation of the word

'kāyaka' is lost sight of, and when it is taken merely as a vocation for living, or work for the belly's sake, obviously such a doubt is expected. Prabhu, who knows this, clears his doubt.

Kāyaka does not mean merely a vocation for the belly's sake. Yes, of course, everyone must take up some vocation or other for one's existence. No doubt it is inevitable. None has the privilege of living on somebody else's labour, as a parasite. Every one must live on his own labour. But the full meaning of kāyaka is not this. It is more extensive. The vocation which an individual follows should not be harmful to the society. It should fulfil the needs of the society. The returns must not be reserved exclusively for oneself but also meet the needs of the society. Therethrough one's selfishness must vanish, making room for the global consciousness and power to descend. Any work done in such absolute detachment shall become worship, or kāyaka. To attain to such a height, outward practices and disciplines are essential, so also the triple dāsōha, or dedication—counsels Prabhu. Being absorbed in kāyaka, one must also attain, through it, to the height that transcends it :

"The deed you do must lead
To knowledge of some other thing.
Both faith and knowledge must be joined in one
When faith has joined with knowledge, then
You must, by razing stark error out,
Attain the ultimate union in
Our Guhēśvaraliṅga, O Mārayya !"

This touches Mārayya's heart. Reflecting and meditating upon it, he forgets his kāyaka of that day. His wife, Lakkamma, cautions him to his duty. He brings more rice-grains than his scheduled measure, at which Lakkamma reminds him that greed for grains in excess does not become him or his kāyaka. Listen to her own words :

"This greed is good for kings :
What has a Śiva devotee, my lord,
To do with such ?
Anger is good for messengers of Death :

What business has an Unborn one with it?
Should you have greed for so much rice?
God does not care for it:
Why, it's hateful to
Amarēśvaraliṅga, Mārayya's love,
O Mārayyā!"

She insists with him to take back the excess rice, scatter it where he had picked it up, and do the kāyaka of the day on the very day. This is the true meaning of kāyaka. If every one takes just as much as he needs, none in the world would suffer from any want. This is the law of the Creator. But on the contrary, if we, out of greed, amass and hoard more than what is necessary for our needs, inequality sets in, which in its turn leads to disharmony and unhealthy competition. One is reminded here of Mahatma Gandhiji's unforgettable words:

"Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day; and if everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation."[1]

When each takes his own necessary share and utilises the rest for the good of his fellow-beings in a spirit of unselfishness and charity, perfect harmony and order shall be established in the society; peace and prosperity shall prevail; the individual's heart expands and assists him in his pursuit of the divine. The ideal of kāyaka set by the Śaraṇas before the society includes all these connotations.

We see here that such a high ideal was then expounded even by a woman like Lakkamma. She points out to Mārayya, her husband:

"There's lack of money for those
Whose heart's impure;
But when true devotees
Perform their task with heart all pure,
Wealth comes to them unsought

1. *Selections from Gandhiji.*

Whichever way they look,
So long they're ready to serve
Amarēśvaraliṅga, Mārayya's love;"

and that to perform triple dāsōha repressing the ego is the path of liberation; and she invites Basavanna and other Śaraṇas home for a meal and thus pays them honour. Basavanna rejoices to see their dāsōha and extols them with joy :

" Look at their hearths, they're poor :
Look at their hearts, they are rich !
Look at their wealth, they're poor :
But they are richly endowed
With a great heart !
Kūḍala Saṅga's Śaraṇas
Are heroes above
All sentiment !
Whom could I
Compare them to ? "

Along with the importance of kāyaka, another factor, equally significant, should be marked here. The words of Lakkamma clearly reveal what height even women had then scaled in spiritual pursuits. This is one of the significant factors which the Śaraṇas' rationalism had achieved in an age when women were generally not entitled to any rights of worship or religion. The age of Maitreyi and Gārgi had gone past, long long ago. Women and Śūdras had no right of access to the Vedas or any other Scripture. To such a level had the age reduced itself in matters pertaining to culture, religion and the spirit. Under such odd circumstances the Śaraṇas boldly proclaimed that there was no distinction between man and woman in the spiritual realm, and provided equal opportunities to women. We come across several women saints with unparalleled spiritual attainments to their credit.

The spiritual attainment of Mahādēviyakka, who was austerity incarnate and who declared, "Consign them to flames —the worldly husbands who decay and die," is perhaps unprecedented. Several other women saints, following their own humble kāyakas and being loyal wives to their worldly hus-

bands, were able to evince a marked advance in spiritual pursuits. Lakkamma whom we have already referred to, is a brilliant example. Even so Mahādēviyamma, the wife of Marayya, is a great saint of the same rank.

Mōḷige Mārayya, abdicating his royal wealth and kingly splendour, had come to Basavanna as a humble bhakta. He followed the kāyaka of hewing wood and selling fuel and therethrough engaged in spiritual discipline. Once, being tired of his kāyaka, he proposed to attain consubstantial union with Liṅga. Longing to realise liberation, he prays:

"If you would give me welcome, do you
Give up this inquisition of the Form
And be yourself the Formless Thing;
Give up this company of Force and be
The Forceless and untainted one;
Give up the nice concern with more or less
In testing my consciousness, and be
Yourself the care-free one;
Give up the stratagems you employed of old
To test the virtue of the other saints;
Do you become all passion-free,
All virtues' treasury,
A sea of knowledge at its flood,
And, opening the gateway of the shrine
Where we can know your deity,
Reveal yourself but once,
And you shall see how fast
My footsteps cling unto your shrine...
O gracious Niḥkaḷaṅka Mallikārjuna,
No subterfuge in this!"

The words then uttered by his wife are really fascinating:

"Wherefore this straining to be
In a state of unity with Śiva?
This is no real piety...
This asking who, and telling whom—
Is this what you have done?

Who were you, then, before? Tell me!
Know what this means and understand yourself,
O Niḥkaḷaṅka Mallikārjuna—
Twice so-beloved of my lord!"

She asks him, "Now if you wish to unite with Śiva, what were you so far? Were you not one with Liṅga? Is not liberation while living possible through kāyaka only? If you ask for Union as a reward for your bhakti after having abdicated your royal wealth, is what you call bhakti labour for wages? Did not the practice of bhakti itself bring to you that unitive state? She adds:

"Why should you, light in hand,
Complain it's dark?
Why should you, when the alchemic stone
Is in your hand, drudge for a wage?
Why should you bend under the hamper's load
With hunger satisfied?
It is not proper for a saint
Who knows the right from wrong,
To chatter about earth and Heaven.
Knowing yourself to be
The certitude,
When the heavenly and terrestrial goal
Is lodged in you, do you realise
Yourself to be
The high transcendent light,
O Niḥkaḷaṅka Mallikārjuna,
Twice so-beloved of my lord."

Thus she explains how this aṅga itself would become Kailāsa, or Heaven. Lastly she expresses her sheer humility, saying, "Through the guidance of your bhakti the woman in me has merged in thy holy feet. There is no longer any question of difference for me. You yourself are my dear lord Immaḍi Niḥkaḷaṅka Mallikārjuna."

Still more, an important factor we are to notice here is Mōḷige Mārayya's height and his generosity of heart. Realising the greatness of his wife, he extols her unreservedly:

"When strength is lost, one has to walk
Planting a stick upon the ground;
When one's persuaded that the sense of I
Persists,
One must admit it with modest grace.
Because you are the strength
Behind my piety,
Because you are the spouse
Of this my quest of truth,
My pain and pleasure are your own,
Not else. Tell me
O Niḥkaḷaṅka Mallikārjuna,
What difference there be herein."

Thus he firmly realises that she is not merely his wife but a never-failing source of strength and support to his bhakti. This is real love between husband and wife. This is a striking example to show to what height wedded kinship between husband and wife can rise. With such a couple in his mind perhaps, Dāsimayya, another Śaraṇa, must have uttered his prophetic words:

"The Bhakti of a wedded pair
Is dear to Śiva.
That without love between them
Is like poison mixed with nectar,
Mark it, O Rāmanāthā."

For the seeker who can realise this saṁsāra would not be an insurmountable hurdle. He need not run away from saṁsāra mistaking it for Māyā. It is possible to live in, and experience, saṁsāra untainted and win your way to your goal through it. What is known as Māyā is not in things but in the eye you see with and the bent of mind that directs it. Prabhu has given vivid expression to this fact:

"They say gold is Māyā,
Woman and land are Māyā.
But gold is not Māyā

Nor woman nor land.
The greed before the mind
Is Māyā ; mark it, O Guhēśvara."

The Śaraṇas assert that he who surmounts this greed before the mind can live here in this saṁsāra, yet win the Divine now and here. Thus they upheld the purity of married life, showed to the world in their own lives how to live, and created a fresh confidence in life.

Thus the Śaraṇas visualised a picture of an ideal society which can show the path of redemption to all. They did not visualise a society of people who would live a single life renouncing the wordly life as all a play of Māyā, nor a crowd of witless fools living like brutes senselessly indulging in sensual pleasures. Man must live this life worthily and live it through. But all his living must lead him to that eternal life. There is no distinction of high and low in occupations. Merit lies only in the way of doing it and in the mind that governs it. The society must become self-sufficient and prosperous in all respects through all types of occupations the Śaraṇas insisted.

They visualised a society not divided into several compartments by caste differences, but one that would synthesize experience and renunciation through co-operative co-existence. Such a society, constituted of individuals, must assist its constituent to attain his utmost good, irrespective of occupation he or she follows, or of the financial position he or she is placed in. Such a society, which accomplishes the welfare of all, is a perfect one. The Śaraṇas not only conceived it, but actually lived it, built it and demonstrated it to the world.

Religious Practice

The Śaraṇas, in putting into practice their socialistic ideas, effected great reformation in the religious field also. The most outstanding aspect of it is their insistence upon that equal opportunity all must have in religion. Religion is not a monopoly of the privileged few. All are equal there. Aspiration for the Divine is the only qualification necessary for a seeker, not caste based on birth, nor prestige born of riches. Prabhu

asks : "Are there leaders in the world who say I am big, he is big ? What boots the bigness of the big ?" Thus Śaraṇas urged that religion must show the path of self-redemption to all without exception.

This doctrine and practice of the Śaraṇas came as nectar to the hearts of the seekers as it were. Hundreds of the unfortunate people who were then looked upon by the society as mean and lowly, found the path of their redemption as a consequence. But for the hypocrites who claimed that religion was their hereditary preserve, that the very existence of religion depended on them, and hoodwinked people into believing these myths and thus exploited innocent people's ignorance in the name of religion, the Śaraṇas' teaching and practice came as a check. There was thus effected a great revolution in religion and society.

Simultaneous with the announcement that all have equal opportunities in religion, the Śaraṇas showed an assured path of religion which would be possible for all to follow. At the very mention of the words Vēdas, Scriptures, systems, commentaries—even of the word religion itself, the common people, having no rights, shivered with fear. To such people the Śaraṇas gave courage by saying "Religion is not in these but beyond the reach of all these." Such a word of hope and confidence came to them like light unto darkness.

Where should they search for God ? He is not in the Vēda ; nor in the Śāstras. Basavanna asks, "Of what avail the vast reading ? What boots too much hearing ? What, an intensive study of the four Vēdas ?" and affirms "Unless the deed obeys the word Lord Kūḍala Saṅga loves not." Hence identity of word and deed is the only qualification essential to the seeker. Those who act up to that truth alone are the respectable. Basavanna reiterates :

> "I call not the apostles
> Of Vēda and Śāstra great,
> Nor those who are shrouded
> In errors of illusion."

Only those who have dispelled Māyā are great. Those that

have conquered the triple-impurity are the 'conquerors'. They alone are the revered and venerable. Ambigara Caudayya echoes the same truth :

"If it is in the Vedas,
How to account for animal-slaughter ?
If it is in the Śāstras
How to account for inequality ?
If it is on the mountains
How could they return
Who went there ?
What shall I say of witless persons ?
'In the heart of him who is pure
In thought, word and deed
I find Thee'—quoth Ambigara Caudayya."

This does not mean damning of the Vēdas ; it only asserts that their ultimate truth lies in the heart of the Divine experient.

The Śaraṇas protested against the ritual part of the Vēdas, but gave exclusive importance to their knowledge part—the truth revealed in the Upanishads. They have criticised in severe terms the sacrifices and other rituals and rites recorded in the Vēdas. What more can you attain from the sacrifices based on violence than animal slaughter ?—they ask. Basavanna here gives the basic truth of all religions of the world :

"What sort of religion can it be
Without compassion ?
Compassion needs must be
Towards all living things ;
Compassion is the root
Of all religious faiths :
Lord Kūḍala Saṅga does not care
For what is not like this."

Another vacana of his strikes the note of piety and compassion in every human heart :

"Cry, cry, O goat,
Because you're slain

For words about words !
Cry, cry, before them
That read the Vedas !
Cry, cry, before them
That hear the Śāstras !
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Will take a fit toll
For what you've wept."

Even so, the Buddha's heart too was moved, thus, with compassion in the past. He also protested against sacrifices and other rites. Basavēśvara, and other Śaraṇas under his leadership, rebelled against them like Buddha. The Śaraṇas' words are greater than all sacrifices and observances for a reward, including the horse-sacrifice. Notice how Basavanna describes the vacanas of the Śaraṇas :

"When the words of the Pioneers
Are like a stream of milk,
With jaggery for its ooze
And sugar for its silt,
My reason is as one
That digs a well apart,
To drink a brackish water, Lord
Kūḍala Saṅgama !"

Dasimayya, too, voices the same !

"If you offer an elephant,
I say no ;
If you offer wealth,
I say no ;
If you offer a large empire,
I say no ;
If you, just for a moment, offer
Your Śaraṇas' divine word,
Lo, it is a gift
Of Thyself, O Rāmanāthā."

It means, in brief, that the fellowship of the mystics and the contact of the seers enabled the seeker to see within and see

clearly his path and know the Light Divine ; not the sacrifices and rituals.

They also condemned polytheism, or worship of several gods, as they did sacrifices and rituals. Similarly, they criticised in a higher vein sakāmabhakti, or bhakti with a motive, which expressed itself in the creation as well as worship of hundreds of gods like Mari, Masani and so on and so forth. Basavanna remonstrates :

"How shall I, Sir, compare to Him
The wax-filled gods that melt and shrink
At sight of fire ?
How shall I, Sir, compare to Him
The gods you sell
In an emergency ?
How shall I, Sir, compare to Him
The gods you bury in the ground
When fear assaults ?
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama, who is one
With the self-rapt Reality,
Alone is God !"

Dwelling on the barren hills, the beaten tracks to villages, and in the midst of viilages, there are some deities that "seize or beg a milching cow, a crying infant, a pregnant woman, a woman in confinement, an unmarried girl, etc." Basavanna sarcastically remarks that a single stroke, "O Kūḍala Saṅgama, Lord be my refuge," is enough to shatter hundreds of 'earthen pots' like Bīrayya, Kētayya, Mallayya and such other deities.

The meaning behind these words is highly significant. The Bhakta's heart, if it is scattered through blind belief in several deities, cannot settle firm in one faith.

"O Sir, wherever they see water,
They dip in it ;
O Sir, wherever they see a tree,
They circle it !
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
How can they know Thee, they who seek
Water that dries up and the withering tree ?"

Basavanna must have said these words after observing people with little or no faith. For those who worship one god to have children, another god for the cure of a disease, a third for the fulfilment of a wish—thus letting themselves be drawn towards several deities and in several directions—how would it be possible to realise that Supreme Principle which is unsullied, peerless and bliss ineffable? With pity for such, the Śaraṇas condemned blind belief and mercenary bhakti.

Going still further, they say that the trinity—Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra—are not the omnipotent and ultimate God. The Śaraṇas' concept of God is so lofty and yet so convincing that it at once fascinates the heart of rational thinkers :

"The Void assumed, a form,
And here the one Śaraṇa stands !
Out of His knowledge and wisdom
Brahma was born.
Out of His peace and patience
Viṣṇu was born.
Out of His rage and anger
Rudra was born.
Let be this triple base....
O Kūḍalacenna Saṅgamadēva,
Now that I know
The greatness of the Śaraṇa
Who is Himself the cause
Of this triple principle,
I do obeisance o'er and o'er."

Thus emphasizes Cennabasavanna.

Hence the Śaraṇas do not accept the bragging talk about the existence of several gods. To them God is one, the only one. He transcends the trinity of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra. He is the Almighty. We must love Him only, like a loyal wife who loves her lord alone. Thus they advocate the worship of one God in the form of Iṣṭaliṅga, so that the seeker's single-pointed faith may grow to its fullness and ultimately merge with the Absolute. So they ridiculed the practice of idol

worship as well, and insisted on the exclusive worship of Iṣṭaliṅga as an emblem of one God or Godhead.

The worship of Iṣṭaliṅga, too, must not end in mere external worship. The holy Guru explains, through Kriyādīkṣā, the nature of Iṣṭaliṅga, to be worn on the gross body ; through mantradīkṣā breathes the six-lettered mantra into the ears ; and through Vēdhā-dīkṣā, communicating the nature of the mantra, invests the Bhavaliṅga by the head-palm touch. In brief, he invests the gross body with Iṣṭaliṅga, the subtle body with Prāṇaliṅga, and the causal body with Bhāvaliṅga. Toṇṭada Siddhalinga explains the principle of Liṅga-investiture thus :

> "The holy Guru, giving form
> To the Void, installed It in my palm.
> Fashioning the Void into formless form
> Merged It into my breath.
> Invoking the Void of Void and calling it Void
> Immersed it in my Will.
> Wearing it in my palm, mind and will
> I have realised the consubstantial union
> Of aṅga and Liṅga, O Mahāliṅga Guruśiva
> Siddhēśvara Prabhu."

Making an image of the Void the holy Guru gives it to the seeker as Iṣṭaliṅga in the palm. Making this image, again, formless form, he lodges it in the breath in the form of Prāṇaliṅga. He instals Bhāvaliṅga in the will, so that the Void seeking the Void should become the Void, Liṅga, the Liṅga Itself in the end. Thus, through the grace of Guru the seeker establishes the union of aṅga and Liṅga Through this kinship, the jīva gradually acquires the spirit of Śiva. By Kriyadīkṣā the body's traits are annihilated. By mantra-dīkṣā the mind gets pure, being purged of its past infections and becomes the sheet-anchor of Liṅga. And through Jñanadīkṣā, the feeling of paśu being gone, the light of supreme knowledge shines. Thus, through the triple dīkṣā, the properties of aṅga are eradicated and Liṅga's are assimilated. The Iṣṭaliṅga, which is daily worshipped on the palm, seizes the entire spirit of the

seeker and helps Liṅga properties develop in him. Basavanna vividly described the kinship between aṅga and Liṅga :

"Lord, when the supreme light of Consciousness,
That's seated in the heart, was joined in me
By the contact of the hand and head,
Behold ! you kindled a great light,
Lord, by bringing the great light
Which was united with my head ;
Behold ! you placed it in my will ;
Lord, bringing the light united with my will,
You placed it in my mind ;
Lord, bringing the great light united with my mind,
You placed it in my eyes !
Lord, bringing the great light united with my eyes,
You placed it in my palm !
Lord, when the integral light that glows and shines
Dazzling within my palm, made manifest
The vision of Iṣṭaliṅga, you made
Assurance in my ears !
Lord, dwelling in the spell made in my ear,
You hid the Magnitude !
Lord, this way did you make me see
Your being in myself,
O Kūdala Sangama, my venerable Lord !

The light of the heart unites with the Light in the crown of the head. That Light of the head descends to the will, the light of the will to the mind, the light of the mind to the eyes. Thus each is absorbed into the other. The holy Guru brings out that Supreme Light absorbed in the eyes and instals It in the palm as Iṣṭaliṅga. This is the concept of Iṣṭaliṅga. Ṣaṇmukhaswāmi has also expressed the same in the following vacana :

"In the heart of my palm He showed
The symbol of the immaculate Supreme ;
In the heart of the symbol
He showed the spark of consciousness ;
In the heart of that spark

He showed the light of Supreme Knowledge ;
In the sublimity of that Light
He showed me,
He showed Himself in me.
To the great Guru who
Has harboured me within Himself
I cry hail, O hail, O Akhaṇḍēśvara."

The Iṣṭaliṅga that sits in the centre of the palm is the symbol of the unsullied Supreme. In the heart of that symbol abides the light of consciousness. In that light abides the Light of great Knowledge. In the sublimity of that Light the seeker finds his own Self, and the immaculate power and himself integrally absorbed in each other. Ṣaṇmukhaswami has thus referred to the divine experience that the Iṣṭaliṅga can bring to the seeker.

Since they had seen the nature of Liṅga in such a lofty concept, the Śaraṇas found everywhere and in everything the omnipresence of Liṅga. "What is known as Liṅga is the' veritable body of Paraśiva integrally wedded to Parāśakti. It is the Supreme Light of Paraśiva. It is the ineffable bliss of Paraśiva It is the Supreme Knowledge of Paraśiva"—says Uriliṅgapeddi. Again, another Śaraṇa reveals the 'Liṅga Principle" as follows :

"Liṅga is pure, the cause of all,
Is Truth—Light—Bliss, and Perfect ;
The cause of the birth of all the worlds ;
The Ultimate Spirit wherein
All Principles are fulfilled ;
Is the Spirit that ferries the soul, across the ocean of births ;
Is the Light that effulges in the Śaraṇas' heart.
He alone knows who knows thus the Liṅga's mystery,
O Nijaguru Svatantra Siddhaliṅgeśvara."

Liṅga is the Light that shines in the heart of the Śaryṇas, It is neither gross nor subtle. Liṅga must be known as "Knowledge in the form, which transcends the gross as well as the subtle, the supreme Nāda and the Supreme Godhead Itself.'

The following vacana of Prabhu's vividly portrays the nature of Liṅga :

"The seed known as Citta
Having grown, the spark called Liṅga
Shot up into form.
Look ye, brothers, incomparable is Its glory !
Try to catch It, It just ceases to be ;
But in It abides the effulgent breath
Of the two-by-seven worlds !
In that breath lies the first seed
Of the root of the ecstatic play
Of our Guhēśvaraliṅga."

The seed, called Citta, itself shoots up as Liṅga, the light. Its uniqueness lies in that it is form to look at, but Void if you attempt to touch it ; and in that Void is hid the shining breath of fourteen worlds, and in that light the ecstatic play of creation—says Prabhu.

It means, in brief, that Iṣṭaliṅga is a form to the eye but formless to the touch. The Śaraṇas state that, though the Formless Absolute is infinite and transcendent, the imaginative conception of It as form is Iṣṭaliṅga. In it alone should the seeker concentrate all his powers of meditation and worship with a single-pointed faith.

The Śaraṇas attach little or no importance to ways of worship without this single-pointed faith. They seem to have realised the need, for the seeker, of certain vows and disciplines. It may be noticed here :

"Observance of a vow
Is a crowning jewel;
Observance of a vow
Is a rare pearl ;
Observance of a vow
Is lustre of life ;
Observance of a vow
Is peace that passeth understanding.
When observance fails
The Lord of Urilinga Peddi approves not."

But the connotation with which the Śaraṇas have invested the term 'observance' is as lofty as it is wide. They do not approve of the many taboos that are self-imposed for the sake of popular applause, physical pleasure and gratification of the tongue, as vows. Mark what Śivaleṅka Manchanna has to say in this regard :

"Is it a vow to refuse to accept
Condiments like salt and another's dishes
When mind has become disgusted?
No, no, nothing but bodily pleasure.
For instance :
Eschewing lust for another's money, another's wife,
Forsaking deceit, murder, theft and extravagant desire,
To accept what comes unbidden and
Not to covet what does not constitute
Vows four-and-three-score, sanctities six-and-fifty
And disciplines two-and-thirty.
In Īśaṇa Mūrti Mallikarjuna Liṅga
All disciplines spring from within."

To give up salt or to refuse to accept another's food preparations, are not real vows or observances. The natural satisfaction at accepting what comes to hand unasked and forgoing all extravagance is a sterling vow. All other vows are incorporated within this single vow. It is, as it were, a mother to all other vows. Basavanna has laid down the rules that the seeker must observe. Here they are :

"To undertake what is come,
That is a vow.
Not to dissemble what one has,
That is a vow.
Not to fail in deed,
That is a vow.
Not to betray the word you said,
That is a vow.
And when our Kūdala Saṅga's
Śaraṇas come,
To yield to the Master what you have,
That is a vow."

Neither the pomp and circumstance of praise and worship, homage and obeisance, nor the observance of mantra and tantra can carry the seeker on the religious path to the height of the Perfect Supreme. But all these must be governed and inspired, like a driving impulse, by purity of heart and enlightened ethical practice. Cennabasavanna asks :

"Is it sanctity
To keep water apart ?
Is it sanctity
To keep a flower apart ?
To keep food apart ?
Look ye all, these are not !
If you can check the five senses,
The six passions, seven elements and eightfold pride,
That is perfect sanctity before
Kūḍala Cenna Sangayya."

Prabhu also reiterates the same :

"They who take to the vow of milk,
Will be born as cats,
They who take to the vow of gram,
Will be born as horses,
They who take to the vow of Flowers,
Will be born as bees,
They who take to the vow of water,
Will be born as frogs :
Far from the six-fold hierarchy are they.
Guhēśvara loves them not
Who are lacking in devout faith."

The same is also echoed by Tōntada Siddhalingēśvara :

"What if you drink water from the spring
Unless you wash out the infection of birth ?
What if you drink water from a tank in the wood
Unless you eradicate the sensual traits ?
What if you give up onion and garlic
Unless you break the swollen pride of saṁsāra
And dispel the evil smell of māyā ?
What if you eat saltless food

Unless you unclasp a woman's hug?
What sanctity is it, what vow is it, you fool?
To the sanctity of a real devotee—
Whose aṅga has become Ācāra-liṅga,
Whose mind to Consciousness is wedded,
Whose evil ways of life have all ceased
And who has established truth and righteousness—
I cry hail, O hail,
O Mahāliṅgaguru Śivasiddhēśvara Lord!"

All the corporal traits that have clung to jīva must cease to be and the properties of Liṅga must shine. Iṣṭaliṅga-worship assists the seeker to accomplish all this. It also enables him to rise higher and higher from Iṣṭaliṅga to Prāṇaliṅga, from Prāṇaliṅga to Bhāvaliṅga and ultimately attain to the consubstantial union of aṅga and Liṅga. This is the real sanctity that the seeker essentially needs. Ṣaṇmukhasvāmi reveals here the nature of 'muktiśīla', or sanctity of liberation:

"With body absorbed in Iṣṭaliṅga
Mind in Prāṇaliṅga, breath in Bhāvaliṅga
Himself in the great and glorious Supreme
Where the triple Liṅga—Iṣṭa, Prāṇa, Bhāva—have become one,
With awareness of oneself having ceased
Having done away with dichotomies—
Oneself to become that Perfect Godhead:
That is the highest sanctity of life,
O Akhaṇḍēśvara!"

The seeker armed with such sanctity of life will annihilate all bonds of Karma and reach his ultimate goal even during this life.

The Śaraṇas' thought-provoking trend of religious rationalism threw its light upon the Karma theory and gave it a new turn. On several occasions the Karma theory, putting a check to the spirit of daring and adventure in man, engendered the growth of pessimistic despair and gloomy frustration in him and consequent inequality in society. It led to the fatalistic inertia

that everything is the fruit of past Karma, that man is a helpless puppet at the mercy of perfidious destiny, that every man is born, in accordance with his past Karma, as wise or ignorant, rich or poor, high or low, good or bad, and that he must needs undergo, his present plight. It thus defended social inequalities. The Śaraṇas strongly rebelled against this defeatist outlook on life.

It does not mean that the Śaraṇas totally deny the reactions Karmas registered in past births. They do say, "The Karma of the past leaves you not free." They also admit that the fruits of the past Karma, good, bad or indifferent, must be experienced :

"Karmas heaped up, being enjoyed
And anticipated, never forsake.
Whoever he be,
They deafen, plague and kill him.
Does the Karma done in the past
Ever desert you for the mere asking ?
Unless experienced it can't exhaust itself.
Until Nija Guru Svatantra Siddhaliṅgēśvara
Looks at you with gracious eye,
Karma cannot exhaust itself through experience."

But they do not sit as helpless victims overcome by despair :

"Whatever tomorrow hath in store
For me, let come today ;
And let today's share come at once :
Here is no coward heart !
Whatever is born, they say, must die ;
It is not within the power
Of Hari or Brahma or other gods to 'scape
The writ our Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Has writ !"

Thus they invite them, welcome them, face them boldly and firmly and mould their future on the strength of their present actions. They stress that the Karmas, regardless of their nature, must be annihilated, and the way of doing it found

out. When the illusion of sensual pleasure is consumed in the fire of Śiva-Knowledge, the noose of Karma tears itself away :

"The Śivayōgi without Karma, who has
Become, knowing the Self, the Seer unsullied,
Is neither Karma-bodied nor Karma-experient ;
Never is he subject to Karma at all ; for instance :
When a fruit perfectly ripe and with juice fulfilled, drops,
Tell me, does it climb the tree again to stick to the stalk ?
The anticipated Karma ripened into the accumulated,
Which ripened into the experienced in turn.
Would there be Karma left ? No, not at all :
The Śaraṇas of Nijaguru Svatantra Siddhaliṅgēśvara
Are free from Karma."

Thus the Śaraṇas do admit the reaction of Karma, but affirm nonetheless that an individual has the ability to annihilate his Karma and mould his future. They thereby created confidence in life.

Rationalists as they were, the Śaraṇas upheld the faith which assists spiritual pursuit, but not blind belief and superstitious customs. Like belief in the Karma theory, many other blind beliefs in hundreds were firmly rooted—astrology, omens, day, week, stars' influence and so forth. Thus, on the one side, people, at every step and for every petty cause, were habituated to look to some supernatural power or other helplessly. On the other side, people were too simple-minded to know the guiles and frauds of those who paraded in ostentatious garbs as seers and ascetics. The Śaranas have condemned both :

"Though one be a Guru,
He should not be followed
If he has fallen from discipline ;
Though it be Liṅga
It shouldn't be worshipped
If it's wanting in discipline ;

Though one be a Jaṅgama
He shouldn't be followed
If his discipline is insincere.
Discipline itself is the Thing,
Observance itself is the breath,
Work itself is knowledge,
Knowledge itself is discipline,
Discipline itself is the breath :
Such a one is himself Ramēśvara Liṅga."

Thus one may be a Guru, Liṅga or Jaṅgama—one is fit to be worshipped only when one is armed with discipline. "Truth or untruth should not be confirmed unless it is actually verified." Let him be guru or Liṅga or Jaṅgama—the bhakti and austerities of one who has not undergone any test are "water in a leaking vessel, a puppet without a cord, a look without a real eye; could you water a plant uprooted? Thus in every work nurturing must be coupled with purity of heart"—assert the Śaraṇas. Abolishing the blind belief, prevailing till then, that "all who are bound to birth are partakers of Śivaliṅga," the Śaraṇas gave great importance to a judicious intellect and actual experience.

By all means must we have faith in what is great. But it should not become a superstition that seeks the protection of several deities in several ways for base and selfish ends. The superstitious belief in worthless deities like Mari and Masani and the observance of day, week, star, auspicious and inauspicious omens and such other irrational customs the Śaranas condemned. We must trust the one Supreme Power with a singular faith that "without It nothing moves". Otherwise we would be liable to the sacrilege of distrusting the omnipotence of the Creator :

"How can I match
A bhakta worshipping because
It is a Monday or a Tuesday, with
A Liṅgabhakta?
Is the day more important, or is Liṅga?

I cannot bear to see the face
Of the misguided worshipper who acts
As if the day did matter more.
If he should practise, thinking that
The day is precious, the day is God,
He is a devotee of the day.
But if the Liṅgabhakta practises
Assuming Liṅga is precious, Liṅga is God,
He is devotee of Liṅga."

Thus the seeker, therefore, must not become a bhakta of days but of God. As Basavanna puts it, "All days are alike to him who says Śiva is his refuge, all days are alike to him who says Hara is his refuge, all days are alike to him who invokes Kūḍala Saṅgama without fail." He further damns those thoughtless people who idly depend upon planets, etc. :

"What business have the Śaraṇas
With due observances
Upon the eight day or the ninth ?
Your rank as Śaraṇa is lost !
You are far removed
From Liṅga and from Jaṅgama !
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
I call them imbeciles
Who, being one man's servant, wait
Upon another Lord !"

The Śaraṇas exemplified in their way of life the truth of the vacana :

"I know not
What is day or week,
Whether a sign of the zodiac
Is auspicious or otherwise ;
To me night is one division,
Day is another division,
Bhakta is of one caste,
The non-bhakta of another."

Cennabasavanna remonstrates :

"Listen ye, O Karmi,
Who discriminate, in doing a thing,
Between dawn, noon and eve.
What does dawn mean to the Śaraṇa ?
What does noon mean to the Śaraṇa ?
What does sunset mean to the Śaraṇa ?
Our Kūḍala Cenna Saṅgama loves not him
Who is misled by an error of
Seeking his own shadow
Though dwelling in shelter
Of the great mountain Meru."

Thus he chides the people who behave like the insane. For those who have taken shelter in the great Meru, where is the difference between auspicious and inauspicious? Where is the sin? Where the Karmas of phenomenal existence? And where is the life bondage? For them all omens are auspicious, all days are holy. Their very word is astrology. Their way of life is itself an almanac. Thus, without giving undue importance to any particular custom or tradition, they emphasize the necessity of ethical and spiritual practices.

The Śaraṇas have not only declared that the Karmic fetters cannot bind the seer who has attained the purest knowledge realising the truth through the ethical way of life, but also demonstrated it in their daily life. It is not right on the part of a seeker to run away from life's Karmas. It is impossible to live without doing some work. Even presuming that one can, it is no life worth the name. Up to the last breath of one's life, the seeker must do some work for his own advancement as well as for the prosperity of the society of which he is a constituent part. But Cennabasavanna cautions : "The deed that is done without knowing the Śaranas' secret is the root of all rebirth." All acts performed in ignorance lead to bondage. But those done with knowledge are redeeming. Both ways of work and knowledge must be synthesized. To go a step further, to the synthesis of knowledge and action, bhakti must become a strong and secure foundation. "Bhakti is the

root, renunciation the tree, and knowledge the fruit." "Though deed is done, one must know something higher still. Faith must supplement consciousness." "If work without knowledge is gross, knowledge without work is hallucination."—such statements of the Śaraṇas must be specially noted.

Thus the path visualised as well as realised by the Śaraṇas is an integral path. They had not only glimpsed the perfect form of religion but also practised it. Religion must help an individual to live in society and work for its prosperity and development. It must be accessible to all living men. It must provide equal room and equal opportunity to all who long for it—this is the vision that the Śaraṇas cherished and accomplished. Treading the same path, they have realised the perfect truth of religion and demonstrated it to the world through their own living example.

The Śaraṇas' Mystic Way

The Śaraṇas define the word anubhāva, or divine experience: 'anubhāva is the gem of the inner soul'; 'anubhāva is the spiritual art'; 'anubhāva is an abiding in the abode of self.' From these expressions one can gather their concept of divine experience. They invested the term with the wealth of their life experience and enriched it with an extensive connotation that would enshrine the highest ideal of man's life.

The word mysticism can serve as an English equivalent of anubhāva. It is used, in certain contexts, in the sense of something mysterious, exclusively esoteric, too vague and recondite to realise and justify by logic or discursive reasoning; something not specific but highly emotional.[1] Besides, it is also used to express an uncertain, indefinite and erroneous idea of God and the world. Again, it is very often used as a term synonymous with the word hypnotism, or to denote a queer state of a day-dreamer's mind.[2]

But it is not proper to have such a limited connotation for the word mysticism. For we notice that the scope of its

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1. James, W., *Varieties of Religious Experience.*
2. Inge, W. R., *Christian Mysticism.*

connotation, at times tending upwards, widens its sweep and rises to the height of a divine, intuitional experience which can make life purposeful and fulfilled. Only when its connotation is taken in this sense can the word mysticism be synonymous with the term anubhāva.[1]

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines Mysticism as follows: "It (Mysticism) appears in connection with the endeavour of the human mind to grasp the divine essence or the ultimate reality of things, and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the Highest. The first is the philosophical side of mysticism, the second its religious side. The first is theoretical or speculative, the second practical." It is considered here in its two aspects, namely, philosophic and religious. If the former aims at investigation into truth, the latter points its actual realisation and experience. It is not a name to be applied to a specific path, but a synthesis of different paths which have attempted to realise the one and the same Truth.[2]

Man, looking at the world with eyes open and being astonished to see its nature, aspires and endeavours to know its mystery. In such an attempt to discover its complete nature, we may mark three ways. An attempt to discern the truth of the world through the mere intellect, is one way. The intellect alone is adequate enough for 'knowledge'. The knowledge gained through the intellect determines man's experiences. That itself is the one test of knowledge—this is the essence of Rationalism, which insists upon the intellect as the only basis of knowledge.

The next goes a step further and says that it is not possible to find out the entire nature of truth through the intellect alone. It may be possible to have a thorough knowledge only through experience derived from tests and experiments. Hence experi-

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1. It is learnt that the Germans have two separate words—Mystic and Mysticismus in order to specify the two meanings of the term : Mysticism in Religion—Inge.

2. Mysticism is not a name applicable to any particular system. It may be the outgrowth of many differing modes of thought and feeling—*Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

ence itself is the basis of knowledge. This is the gist of what is called Empiricism.

But these two may help us to have knowledge up to a certain stage, argues the third 'ism,' but not to procure complete knowledge. It insists that it is impossible to find out the whole truth through the mere intellect or experiments. At some point or other the intellect is bound to halt and find itself helpless and baffled, and unable to see ahead. The Truth that pervades the entire universe yet transcends it, is beyond the reach of logic and reason, of tests and experiments. To know that which is transcendent one needs an eye that is transcendent too. It means that the person in quest of Truth must turn his eye within. A new world, unseen by him so far, shall now pass into his ken. Some unseen spirit inaccessible to mere intellectual pursuits and experiments wakes up the heart. The seeker then realises that this spirit, which quivers in the heart, can offer genuine solutions to the serious problems of life. This itself may be called mysticism.[1]

Meditating upon this spirit that wakes within the heart may be, in a sense, called anubhāva, or experience of the Divine, or mystic experience. This concept of anubhāva is a gift presented by the Śaraṇas to the spiritual world. In poetics, this term is used in some other sense. The Śaraṇas have used it in a very special sense. They use it to denote an experience derived from their consciousness and their way of life loved in loyalty to it. It is the realisation of the Godhead as well as the bliss thereof. Though this word carries the meaning of mysticism, yet it reveals some other sense, which is exemplified in the Śaraṇas' life and practice and transcends the range of ordinary meanings of the term. However, for our present purpose let us take the sense of the word anubhāva as equivalent to mysticism and try to investigate its general as well as its specific sense.

With regard to mysticism a lot of research and inquiry is being undertaken by the Pundits. Many have tried to measure the scope of the word on the basis of many a mystic's life and

1. Josey, C. C., *Psychology of Religion.*

utterances. When we look at such attempts, we notice that very many seekers of various other countries have sought to have a glimpse of the truth which the sages and seekers of our country were able to see. Though these ways seem to differ in their outward expressions, the inner Truth that they have striven to see is one and the same; the experience they have undergone is also one and the same.

Though it is nearly impossible to compress the entire meaning of this divine experience in a brief and pithy statement, yet several persons have tried their best to give expression to its fundamental aspects epigrammatically. For instance: "Mysticism is the immediate feeling of the unity of the self with God; it is nothing, therefore, but the fundamental feeling of religion, the religious life at its very heart and centre."[1]

"Mysticism is religion in its most concentrated and exclusive form. It is that attitude of mind in which all other relations are swallowed up in the relation of the soul with God."[2] Mysticism denotes that attitude of mind which involves a direct, immediate, first-hand intuitive apprehension of God."[3]

It can be seen from these definitions that anubhāva embodies three fundamental principles—'God', 'soul' and 'the relation of the soul to God.' That is, the ultimate Absolute, the soul and the immortality consequent upon their consubstantial union form the foundation of anubhāva, or mystic experience. The means through which this eternal longing of a soul to attain immortality through consubstantial union with God is fulfilled, is itself known as Anubhāva Mārga, or the path of mysticism.

The soul is fundamentally dynamic, and the essence of bliss ineffable. But so long as it is cribbed and cabined within the body, its conscious force manifests itself in different forms and in different measure. The same current of electricity flowing through wire made of different metals, takes different forms, like heat and light. Even so, the soul reveals itself in different

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1. Inge, W. R., *Mysticism in Religion.*
2. ibid.
3. Ranade, R. D., *Mysticism in Maharashtra.*

functions. Mysticism constitutes a progressive ascent of the individual, step by step, from matter, or the food sheath, where he believes (wrongly) that he is the senses of his gross body; through the vital, mental and intuitional sheaths to the ultimate stage of Bliss, which is his real nature. This is the supreme height that mystic experience attains to.

In brief, to rouse the power abiding in the innermost core of the heart and through the eye opened in consequence to have a direct experience of the Divine Truth, may be regarded as 'anubhāva', or mystic experience. This is realised through the inner intuition (antaḥsphuraṇa) that transcends the reach of mind and intellect Thus, intuition can be taken as the English equivalent of antaḥsphuraṇa. As Dr. Radhakrishnan puts it :

"Intuition is the extension of perception to regions beyond sense."[1]

Sri Aurobindo describes the fourfold potencies of intuition: "Intuition has a fourfold power. A power of revelatory, truth-touching or immediate seeing of significance, a power of true and automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relations of truth to truth—these are fourfold potencies of Intuition."[2] Thus he means that intuition is the power of directly perceiving, hearing, touching and discriminating the nature of the truth that is the root-cause of creation. In his *Life Divine* he has vividly drawn the chart of the mind's adventurous ascent to the supramental consciousness and immersion in the Bliss of Brahman, evolving through higher mind, illumined mind, intuition and overmind.

The Creation is an endless perennial continuum. Our intellect picks up its moment's copy and attempts to know its nature. But if we are to understand the entire nature of that continuum we must have the power to participate in its current itself and find it. That which springs from the emotional exuberance kindled by the observation of the external beauty of the creation and by the imaginative conception of the glory of

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1. Radhakrishnan, S., *An Idealist View of Life.*
2. Sri Aurobindo, *Life Divine.*

the Creator who governs the creation, is poetry. When this experience becomes more immediate and intense still, to find, in the midst of the everchanging cosmos of bewildering variety, the one abiding Truth and to transmute oneself ultimately into that Truth itself, is the high goal of all mystic endeavour. This transmutation, this sea-change, is anubhāva.

This mystic experience in its ultimate state is indeed ineffable. As Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa says, it is, as it were, a doll of salt trying to fathom the depth of an ocean. Speech stills into silence. It is a light which transcends the reach of thought and speech. Nevertheless, the seeker tries to express, in terms of words and symbols, his experience of the Divine and the nature of the path that leads to it, for the benefit of others. Those words, it is true, cannot reveal the perfect state of that experience; but at least they stand as a finger-post forever guiding the seekers who strive thereafter.

Moreover, when we talk of the mystic path and mystic literature, we have to stretch the scope of its connotation without limiting it to the state of ultimate bliss merely. Mr. C. C. Josey tells us that the word mysticism denotes 'a state of being' as well as 'a kind of knowledge.'[1] It means, then, that it must embody the two aspects—'the ultimate state of self-realisation' and 'the path of attaining it.' If we are to vivify that experience in the second sense, we may put it as follows: "It is a path on which one sets out on the principle that it is possible to have a direct experience of Truth only through the power that transcends logic and reason."

But it does not mean that it cannot be justified by just and cogent reasons, because it relies only on blind belief. What is needed here is not blind belief but intuitional awareness which transcends it. No doubt it is emotional. But it is not a mad outburst sprung from mental aberration. It is a divine onrush inspired by the light of love. W. R. Inge says, "The love of God is one legitimate definition of mysticism."[2] And he points out the place of thought which transcends common logic:

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1. Josey, C. C., *Psychology of Religion.*
2. Inge, W. R., *Mysticism in Religion.*

"Mysticism is reason above rationalism, reason being used for the affirmation of the whole personality acting under the guidance of its highest faculty.[1]"

Reason is, by all means, the ground of mysticism. Its power is essential, needed to test the growth of the seeker's personality. But Dean Inge affirms that mysticism transcends the range of ordinary reason and logic.

Sri Aurobindo has more clearly expressed the same opinion in his books. While asserting that mere intellectual knowledge cannot suffice for the perfect fulfilment of life, he has observed :

"Intellectual clarity is not enough ; he must see with the inner sight illumining his blind outward human vision, so that he may act with the consent of his whole being, with a perfect faith in all his members, śraddhā, with a perfect devotion to the Self of his self and the Master of his being and to the same Self of the world and Master of all being in the Universe."[2]

This fullness of wisdom that transcends the reach of intellect, he calls in his *Life Divine*, Supreme Reason. It is not inimical to intellectual knowledge. It embodies, yet transcends it. It extends the scope of our ordinary mortal wisdom. It analyses the infinite variety of our life. It discovers the one abiding force behind the ever-changing many, the one harmony behind the bewildering diversity. It points to the ultimate goal of human life. And it helps the seeker to realise the experience of that ultimate here in this life.[3]

The same opinion is voiced by Plotinus in his *Enneads* as follows :

"The consciousness of the One comes not by knowledge but by an actual presence superior to any knowing. To have it, the soul must rise above knowledge and above all its wandering from its unity.[4]" Thus he pleads for need of Wisdom that transcends ordinary reason, and that one must, therethrough, ascend from the many to the One. Thus, mysticism is the way

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1. ibid.
2. Sri Aurobindo—*Essays on the Gita.*
3. Sri Aurobindo—*Life Divine.*
4. Inge, W. R., *Mysticism in Religion.*

of finding unity in diversity, the changeless in the changing and the way of the seeker himself finally merging into the one, Brahman.

Ever since man began to reflect upon the ultimate goal of life, it may be said, the quest of this path, too, started and, through the constant efforts of a series of seekers, attained to its perfection. Seekers in different countries and at different times have striven hard to discover the mystery of life. Nevertheless, all of them have marched towards one and the same goal. Though the nature of their strife looks different in outward appearance, yet all who have reached the goal have undergone a uniform experience. The paths appear to be different, yet have all led the seeker to the same ocean as it were. Though each has come from his own valley, the mount to be scaled is one and the same. The vision of the Divine to be had is the same. In the utterances of all the mystics of the world, therefore, we see the same refrain of Truth.

But at the initial stage, when seekers are stuck and cannot go ahead, these paths do seem to be different. And it is also quite possible that the seeker is likely to mistake the partial vision he has seen at the earlier stage, for the ultimate one. This we notice in the history of mysticism of all countries.

For instance, in India the Vedas may be regarded as the first works on mysticism. The fount of mysticism, that springs forth in the early Vedas, we find, goes gradually widening; by the time we reach the Upanishads, their final stage, it has grown into a large river running towards the ocean of truth.

What we notice in the earlier portions of the Vedas is the worship of several powers. Each power of nature is conceived as one god and worshipped. The dominating portion of the Vedas pertains to sacrifices and other rites and rituals related thereto. By performing sacrifices in a disciplined manner, true to the rules and regulations laid down in that respect, one does possess a sort of esoteric and supernormal powers. The belief that, through this power, one can achieve happiness here as well as hereafter, is the basis of all sacrifices. This forms the ritualistic portion of the Vedas. An unflinching faith that the

Vedas are superhuman creations and that every word that is uttered there is a revealed word and the highest form of truth, has, many a time, curbed the discriminating reason, dwarfed the intuitive sense and made man seek refuge in supernatural powers through superstition and blind belief.[1]

By the time we come to the Upanishads, passing through the Araṇyakas, we notice that the mystic outlook has blossomed and opened out fully. The Upanishads, considered from all respects, may be said to be the first books on mysticism. They declared that the rewards of rituals and sacrifices are meagre and momentary and that for the attainment of lasting bliss dedicated knowledge alone is the real means. For the first time the Upanishadic sages discovered the potentialities of the mind and the amazing transmutation that could be attained when mastery over it was established. Man need not helplessly seek the shelter of a supernormal Power with blind belief. He can, and he must, attain direct and actual vision and experience of that Power, because all are the children of that immortal Power—declared the Upanishads.

We see how the mind of the Upanishadic sages turns within and absorbs itself in quest of truth :

"ōṁ kēnēṣitaṁ patati, prēṣitaṁ manaḥ
kēna prāṇaḥ prathamaḥ praitiyuktaḥ
kēnēṣitaṁ vācamimāṁ vadanti,
cakṣuḥ śrotam ca dēvoyunakti.[2]"

They had to face obstinate questionings like, "At whose behest, at whose instance, does this mind engage itself in itself? At whose fiat does vital breath begin its function for the first time? At whose wish do people talk? Who is the god that commands eye and ear?" That is, for all our bodily movements some unseen power must be responsible. What is the power

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1. Dasgupta, S. N., *Hindu Mysticism.*
2. "By whom willed and directed does the mind light on its objects? By whom commanded does life, at first, move? at whose will do (people) utter this speech? And what God is it that prompts the eye and the ear?"—*Kenopanishad.*

that governs this world of diverse forms and names? Thus, their mind busied itself in the investigation of fundamental problems. Progressing through their intuitional exercises, they realised :

"aṇōraṇiyān mahatō mahīyān
ātmasya jantōrnihitō guhāyāṁ,"[1] or

"smaller than the small, greater than the great, the self is set in the heart of every creature." They also realised that they must see the omnipresent God in this Ātman :

"nityō nityānāṁ cētanascētanānāṁ,
ēkō bahūnāṁ yō vidadhāt kāmam
tamātmastharn yēnupaśyanti
dhīrāsteṣāṁ śnātiḥ śāśvatī nētarēṣāṁ ;"[2]

i. e. "those who find in their soul the omnipresent God who manifests the one in many, have imperishable bliss, but none else." In these words of the sages we notice the new outlook clearly. So, the spirit that abides in the heart of everything is one. It pervades everywhere in different forms. Only when that spirit is realised shall the imperishable bliss be had. This Self-realisation is the *summum bonum* of life.

How should that ultimate aim of life be realised? How would this omnipresent Self, who abides as bodiless in bodies, as eternal in all that is temporal, be realised? Herein also the sages caution, "nāyamātmā pravacanēna labhyō na mēdhayā na bahunā śrutēna," or "Self cannot be realised through mere talk, or hearing or genius." One must go beyond all these. Then, through God's grace, the eye that transcends all these shall open. Then only shall the reali nature of the Self manifest." Thus, the sages ardently longed to have a direct vision of the Self :

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1. *Kenopanishad.*

2. "The one eternal amid the transient, the conscious amid the unconscious, the one amid the many, who grants their disires to the wise who perceive Him as abiding in the soul. to them is eternal peace and to no others."

"hiraṇamayēna pātrēṇa satyasyāpihitaṁ mukhaṁ
tatvam pusannapa urnu satyadharmaya dṛṣṭaye,[1]" or "the face of truth is covered with a golden disc. Unveil it, O Pusan, so that I who love the truth may see it."—they pray. The sages herein have beautifully described the eye of a mystic. To see truth after removing the lid of gold is itself anubhāva, or mystic experience. So did the sages see the truth directly and actually, and become seers. They preached in the Upanishads the way of attaining to the truth that they had attained. Seeing and experiencing the fullness of the ideal by which mankind might attain fulfilment, they made it the precious treasure of India.

The book of foremost importance, from the mystic point of view, after the Upanishads, and one which has embodied their essence, is the *Bhagavadgītā*. It describes the state of Self deriving delight in Self, untethered by the fetters of life though caught up in its battle. It also reveals the path of yogic synthesis which is essential for realising the spiritual height of the steadfast one. Moreover, if the philosophic quest is to reach fulfilment it would not suffice if it merely gratified the intellect, the *Gītā* insists, but it must be an experience to make the heart bloom. Krishna had to bestow upon Arjuna the divine eye in order that all his teaching might be fruitful and Arjuna might take to his duty again. Arjuna, through the divine eye, sees the cosmic form of God. That divine eye is the inward eye that the mystic needs. Realisation of truth is itself the seeing of God's cosmic form. The *Gītā* thus teaches, by way of imagery, the need of an inward eye for the direct experience of the Divine, or Truth.

This ideal laid down by the Upanishads as well as the *Bhagavadgītā* developed afterwards into several branches. The *Āgamas* and *Purāṇas* each reveal one of its aspects. In the lives of several seekers who appeared on the scene in different parts of India from time to time, we find the same ideal reincarnated again and again.

Not only that, the ideal set before all the seekers of the

1. *Ishopanishad*

world who have attained the Ultimate goal is also the same. In outward appearances there may be difference and diversity in the means they employed. But the problem that confronted them all is one and the same. How to remove the hurdles that lie between the soul cribbed in the body and the Universal Soul that pervades the cosmos, and bring about consubstantial union of the two, is the question. This is the fundamental basis of all the religions of the world. Face the problem boldly, follow the path of attaining union with the Divine, know It and directly experience It—that is mysticism, Divine experience, anubhāva.

2. *The Mystic Path*

Though the ideal of mystic experience is one and the same, yet it varies from seeker to seeker, conditioned as they are each by his own temperament, environment, ability and his preliminary preparations. The seeker does, in the end, immerse his limited self into the universal Self. But in the initial stage he, too, is an individual; he is to live his life bound by the conditions imposed by time and place. These shape the course of his mystic journey.

A seeker may be a transcendentalist, his concept of the Divine being inspired by an intuition that transcends the ordinary senses. Another may be a sacramentalist, treading the path which runs on the lines of his own particular religion, dogma and philosophy, as his bent of mind must realise the direct experience of the Divine through them only. A third may be a dhyānayogi (yogi through meditation); a fourth a karmayogi (yogi through work). If one worships a personal god, some other may crave for the direct experience of the impersonal Godhead. Or he may be an artist who finds the essence of the cosmic spirit in the various aspects of Nature and her thousand beauties. With all that, the aim of all these is one and the same,—to have direct union with the Godhead. It is not mere discussion or speculation or sermonising about It; but to have actual vision and experience of It. This common and general longing brings about unity in the seeming diversity. Such an outlook or approach must govern and guide our survey of various mystics and their varied experiences. To start with,

let us see the way of the European mystics, chiefly the Christian mystics, through the utterances of one or two of them.

What is known as Mysticism is not merely an individualistic experience, but also the philosophy of life and the path that can carry the seeker to that experience. Considered in this sense, St. Paul, more than Jesus Christ, it must be said, is the pioneer of Christian mysticism.[1]

St. Paul finds three aspects in man's personality: "There is the flesh which is our animal nature; the psychical man, and the spiritual man;"[1] i.e., corporal consciousness, mental consciousness and spiritual consciousness—these three aspects complete man's individuality. This reminds us of our three bodies—gross, subtle and causal—and the five sheaths. Subsequently, he makes a minute and graphic discussion of each of them.

Like Basava's dictum, 'the body itself is the temple', Saint Paul's words regarding the body may be carefully marked :

"The body must be reverenced and preserved from defilement because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit." St. Paul suggests that this body is not different from us. It is also a part of our self. But it is doomed to perish. When it perishes, a spiritual body is kept ready for us. The triple distinction of body made by Indian thinkers, as gross, subtle and causal may be said to be subtler than St. Paul's.

The psychical man, or mental being, mentioned by him is a personality fashioned at the level of our ordinary mental experiences. The mind of the psychical man at this ordinary level oscillates between the transient pleasures of the senses on the one side and the eternal spiritual bliss on the other. In the pull of this dual conflict he may, tending upward, ascend to the summit of spiritual joy or, tending downward, fall into the valley of sensual and momentary pleasures. When he, emerging out of the clutches of mortal forces, rises higher, he crosses the physical levels and attains to the spiritual body—observes St. Paul.

To realise this spiritual body is the highest aim of the

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1. Inge, W. R., *Mysticism in Religion*

seeker's efforts. Here he completely sets at naught his little self. That is, it is not the annihilation of self but its unfolding, its progressive evolution. A person who has flowered to the fullness of his Self crosses the limited barriers of I and mine and becomes [the cosmic spirit itself. Note what Inge says here :

"In the spiritual life personality is not abolished; but individual separateness is transcended."[1]

St. Paul's statement, that to eliminate our limited self and by uniting with the universal Soul, to find ourselves in all the souls of the universe, is mysticism, echoes the truth realised by the Upanishadic sages.

Like St. Paul, several other Christian seekers have contributed to the development of the mystic way. We may mention, for instance, the names of St. Augustine, E. Meister Eckhart, Jacob Boehme, St. Bernard, and St. John of the Cross.

One who has made a profounder inquiry into the philosophical aspect of mysticism is Plotinus. "Its greatest thinker is Plotinus", says W. R. Inge, and quotes Whittker's words: "The greatest individual thinker between Aristotle and Descartes." Plotinus has deeply thought over mysticism. And he is also the mystic who has lived the principles emerging from his deep thought. We see a unique union of these two powers in his personality. That is why his path denotes the synthesis of the two. Evelyn Underhill has aptly observed : "His system is a synthesis of practical spirituality and formal philosophy."[2]

An incident which occurred when he was in Rome vividly portrays his personality. Plotinus was very dear and near to Gallienus, the Roman Emperor, and his wife, Solomina. On the strength of this friendship he sought some help from them. Revealing his dream of building an ideal city called Plotonopolis, he prayed for their aid. The emperor, it seems, tactfully made him give up that vain adventure. But what is to be specially noted here is the mental bent of Plotinus : his ambition of building an ideal city in this world itself. That is, he is not one

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1. Inge, W. R., *Mysticism in Religion*
2. Underhill, E., *Eessentials of Mysticism and Other Essays*

who is satisfied with "the flight of the alone to the Alone." He believed that his own pursuit is not meant for his personal redemption alone but for the good of the whole of mankind. We find the same aim and aspiration in the Śaraṇas as well. But the Śaraṇas, without attempting to build a new Utopian city, strove to make the existing city into the ideal city of their dreams. However, the humanitarian compassion that virbrates in either is one and the same.

Plotinus tried to see the Divine in all animals, transcending the animal instincts of ordinary life, and seeing it everywhere through constant pursuit, realised it actually. He has experienced the Bliss that transcends the reach of mind, intellect and thought. Therefore, his philosophy is not a mere speculative enquiry but is dominated by experience.

Plotinus enunciates: The universe was not created on some day in point of time. But this does not mean that it is, in its present form, a myth or a dream. There is one Power which is the root-cause of all this. He calls it the Absolute God-head, or the One. The cosmos has evolved out of that Power, and to involve back into it is its ultimate goal. This almost echoes, as we have seen in Chapter II, the Śaraṇas' view.

This Absolute one, this Indivisible Power or universal Soul is the foundation of his philosophy. He has made a subtle investigation into the relation between the universal Soul that is the cause of all manifest creation, and its fragments, the individual souls. Though the universal Soul is the operative cause that governs every movement of the universe, yet It transcends all. Nor is It the sum-total of all individual souls. It is the energy that impels all these.

Though the individual souls differ from each other, yet they are all one in essence. Therefore, they join with each other yet can be one with the universal Soul in consubstantial union without being overcome by error or illusion. And to unite with the Universal Soul is their ultimate goal. This power is innate in its very nature. Otherwise the aspiration to rea lise the Universal Soul would not have been felt by them. Plotinus observes :

"We could not see the sun if there were not something sun-

like in ourselves, nor could a soul which has not become beautiful have any knowledge of beauty."[1] Only because the fundamental core of the Universal Soul abides in the heart of every individual soul that it has been possible for each soul to attain the Divine and enjoy the Bliss ineffable. Saying that the soul that is not itself beautiful cannot see beauty, Plotinus has pointed to the primary aim of all religions.

It seeems Plotinus had, now and then, a fleeting flash of experience of the Divine realisation. Porphyry, who was greatly responsible for the preservation of his writings, attested to the fact that, during the former's stay with him for six years, Plotinus had this Divine experience four times.

It is an experience that transcends words. Though it was just an experience and nothing more, he has tried to record it in words. He speaks of the thing that is essential for Its realisation: "The soul must remove itself from good and evil and everything else, that it may receive the One alone as the One is alone." Thus, to attain to that Perfect Truth one must transcend merit as well as sin and such other dichotomies. For that Truth is one without a second and beyond the reach of all polarities. When such sublimity beyond all dichotomies is, through divine grace, attained, our eye withdraws itself from all appearances and turns within. Then the screen, which was hanging between so far, moves aside and the direct experience of the Divine Truth is realised. During that experience all sense of duality vanishes and the seeker's self is completely lost in the supreme Truth. So long as the soul enjoys that bliss, all other earthly pleasures appear worthless: "When in this state the soul would exchange its present condition for nothing, not for the very heaven of heavens, for there is nothing better, nothing more blessed than this."[2]—asserts Plotinus, and adds:

"All things that once pleased it, power, wealth, beauty, science, it declares that it despises; it fears no evil, while it is with the One or even while it sees him, though all else perish around it, it is content if it can only be with him; so happy is

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1. Inge, W.R., *Mysticism in Religion*
2. Inge, W. R., *Mysticism in Religion*

it.[1]" This suggests that Plotinus describes here the state of the Divine experiment from his own experience.

Thus, to have direct realisation of Truth is the ultimate goal of mysticism. All other investigations and inquiries, exercises and disciplines are necessary only for leading the seeker to this unitive state. When it is actually attained, all the foregoing apparent dualities cease to be. Whether St. Paul or Plotinus or St. Augustine, whether Greek mysticism or Islamic Sufism or Hindu mysticism—all become one and the same on this ultimate height.

To attain to this, each nation in accordance with its aims and ideals, each seeker in accordance with his ability, temperament and environmental influences, might seem to have followed different paths. But the core of mysticism is one and the same. Religions like Hinduism, Christianity and Islam seem to differ apparently in their philosophical quest and their ritualistic custom; but at the final state of mysticism there is unity among them. William James echoes the same, when he says, "The mystic classics have neither birthday nor native land[2]."

Though mysticism transcends, in its ultimate stage, all barriers of time and space, yet those who have experienced that supreme bliss have been social beings bound by the limits of time and place. Hence they cannot but bear the stamp of the influence of their age and society on their mystic training and experience. Besides, their personal nature and temperament, and the religious and philosophical background under which they pursued their aspirations also leave their mark on their path. To take the example of India alone, the ideal set before all seekers and philosophers is one and the same; yet how different have been the paths they have followed and the experiments they have made to attain to that ideal! Though the truth enunciated by the Vedānta Sūtras is one and the same truth, yet each Acharya looked at the same truth in his own way, and wrote commentaries according to his lights. Leaving aside these matters of philosophical inquiry, when we look at the

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1. ibid
2. James, W., *Varieties of Religious Experience*

spiritual life of seekers like the Āḷvars, Nayanārs, Śaraṇas and Dāsas of the South, the Sants of Maharashtra, Kabir and other mystics of North, and Chaitanya of Bengal—we do find differences between them pertaining to personality, age, region and society.

These differences are not mutually contradictory but complementary. As a consequence of all these, Indian mysticism has been abundantly enriched. The Śaranas' mysticism also forms a precious part of this wealth. Though it has imbibed the lustre of all other paths, it possesses its own self-effulgent light. That is its speciality.

The dominant aspect that we notice in the Śaraṇa mysticism is synthesis. They have effected a perfect harmony between dvaita and advaita (difference and non-difference), knowledge and action, devotion and meditation. This is a great achievement of their mysticism. That which has stood as a background to their way is the Veeraśaiva philosophy which is a synthesis of all religions and all systems. We have briefly noted already in the Śaraṇas' own words the characteristics of the Six-fold Hierarchy which is the core and essence of Veeraśaivism. Here we may study how that principle was exemplified as a living, powerful and unique way of mysticism.

We find seekers of various temperaments among the Śaraṇas. Basavēśvara is an imperishable store of bhakti; Prabhu, the sovereign of radical renunciation; Cennabasavanna, the great seer and supreme exponent of philosophy and religion; Siddharāma, the yogi of action; Mahādēviyakka, a great fund of bridal devotion; even so, in all other Śaraṇas, as in Maḍivāḷa Mācayya and Mōḷige Mārayya, we notice a speciality in each. Maḍivāḷa Mācayya was a washerman by profession. Yet through the highest honesty in his own occupation and single-pointed faith, he accomplished consummation in bhakti. It is unique of Mōḷige Mārayya that he renounced all his wealth, power and position and, gladly embracing poverty, took up the occupation of gathering and selling fuel; yet through that humble occupation he attained the summit of mysticism along with his wife. The path of each of them is mysticism. But what is the single thread that goes through all

their differences and peculiarities as a vital spring of inspiration? It is the core of mysticism.

The Christian mystics have reckoned three primary stages on the path of their pilgrimage to the Divine.[1] The first is Purification or Purgation, which means purifying the mind and turning towards divine knowledge; the second, Illumination, or Enlightenment, which means attaining the light of knowledge through meditation and concentration; the third and last, the Unitive love, or attainment of consubstantial union with the Divine. They claim that these three steps complete the ascent to the Divine. The same type of gradation may be seen in the Śaraṇas' Ṣaṭsthala, or the Six-fold Hierarchy. The Bhakta and Mahēśa Sthalas may be roughly identified with Purification; the Prasādi and Prāṇaliṅgi with Illumination; and the Śaraṇa and Aikya with Unitive love. But in the Ṣaṭsthala are ncorporated all phases of human psychology, more subtle still.

We notice in the Bhakta-sthala the seeker's anguish, strife and discontent that his very life's purpose shall be in vain if he fails to know the composite nature of feelings like wonder, delight, pain, pleasure and fear at the sight of the tantalizing multiplicity and bewildering variety of the cosmos, and to be reborn, as it were, realising the secret of it all; whereas in the Mahēśa-sthala the rigidly disciplined life is armed with unflinching faith and determined will to withstand the throes of this rebirth. The life of one reborn, which is characterised by enlightened consciousness, is depicted in the Prasādi and Prāṇaliṅgi sthalas. If we notice an inspired outlook to see the grace of the Divine in all aspects of the Cosmos in the Prasādi Sthala, the next step belongs to the Prāṇaliṅgi who imbibes everything in himself through intuition. The seeker who has thus imbibed all in him and become his own Self, would become, in the Śaraṇa Sthala, an executive force that can transmute his own state into the Divine form. The Aikya-sthala, or the unitive state, denotes the consubstantial union of the seeker's soul with God, or the universal Soul. Thus we notice

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1. Underhill, E., *Essentials of Mysticism and Other Essays*; Inge, W.R., *Mysticism in Religion*

in all these Sthalas an attempt to accomplish a balanced evenness and fulfilment of all the energies of mind.

Mental anguish, divine discontent and an intense urge to transcend the temporal and attain the eternal, which we notice in the initial stage of the seeker — all these characteristics are described by the Western scholars as the 'dark night of the soul,' and the consequent transformation as 'conversion'.

William James says that this conversion is of two types: (i) Volitional; (ii) by self-surrender[1].

If we go into greater details, we find the two primary functions of mind. For instance, let us suppose that we try to recollect a certain name that is already forgotten. We often say, and it is everybody's usual experience, that "the name is just on the tip of the tongue, but somehow it does not come out!" Then we drop our attempt of recollecting the name and for the present divert our attention. After a brief while that name comes to our memory of its own accord with no effort on our part. What is the reason therefor? A thing which could not be remembered by deliberate effort in the waking consciousness is now automatically remembered though our waking consciousness is now devoted to something else. How? The waking or surface consciouness is an outward aspect of our mind. Our mind has an inner aspect. The effort made and dropped by the surface consciousness is extended in the subconsciocs, which pushes up the required answer, not provided so far, in an unexpected way. The sudden and unanticipated transformation that takes place in the seekers at times pertains to this phase of the mind.

In the accounts of some seekers we notice that most unexpected and astonishing changes have taken place in their lives. Some of them were far from the spiritual path. But some unknown incident brings about a sudden turn in their life and so they dedicate the remaining part of their life to the Divine quest.

Nāmadēva, of Maharashtra, is a very good illustration of this. He was a brigand engaged in robbing and plundering

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1. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*

travellers, and murdering them when needed. He once killed eighty-four cavalry troopers together and displayed ruthless cruelty! Shortly thereafter, he happened to see, as he was passing by a temple, a babe crying and his mother comforting him. On talking with the mother he finds he has been the cause of her widowhood. Of the eighty-four troopers whom he had killed, her husband was one. At the sight of that widow and her orphan babe he blushes for his inhumanity and grieves sincerely. As a consequence, a sudden change of heart takes place. As though an unknown screen which had shrouded his heart so far had moved aside, his heart melts. Entering the temple forthwith, in an anguish of repentance, he bathes the idol in his blood. Since then, his way of life takes a new turn. Straightaway going to Pandharpur, he becomes a loyal devotee of Viṭhala and, after severe spiritual exercises and discipline turns into a great saint.

Neither in Jñānēśvara, nor Ēkanāth, nor Tukāram do we notice such sudden and unexpected transformation. Jñānadēva got initiation from his brother Nivṛttināth and pursued his spiritual discipline. Ēkanāth left home for Dēvagaḍa in the twelfth year of his age, sought protection from a Guru, Janardhan Panth by name, and became, through constant exercise in yogic discipline, a saint. As for Tukārām, he is one who refined himself in the crucible of life's ordeals and miseries. A series of grievous misfortunes swept upon him, as if deliberately. His parents died; he lost what he had in his trade; he had to helplessly see his wife die of starvation during a severe famine; his son died. Thus, after passing through such a harrowing tale of misfortunes, we are told, he got at last the divine grace of Bābāji in his dream.

In the case of Chaitanya, the Bengal saint, the change that is effected is unexpected. Once he goes to Gaya to perform the death anniversary of his father. It is difficult to say what happened there exactly. Nonetheless that he met an ascetic called Ishvarapuri, is a notable event. That becomes the cause of his transformation. A spirit that was so far lying dormant in him suddenly wakes up. He returns from there as a great devotee. He does not relish anything but repetition of the divine

name. His Sanskrit learning and scholarship in grammar having all vanished, what now remains in him is but devout love for the Divine.

We do find such sudden turns and changes in the lives of Western saints, too. St. Paul, Martin Luther, Boehme may be studied as instances in this respect. It is said that St. Paul saw a flash and heard a voice in the sky on his way to Damascus.

St. Augustine's transformation is more amazing still. Once, when he is sitting lost in mental anguish caused by the conflict of merit and sin, he hears from a neighbouring house somebody singing — "Take up and read ! Take up and read !" Immediately he opens the Bible and reads the line that comes to his notice. That itself becomes a divine message for him and the cause of his transformation. As he was reading, he says, "all darkness about me vanished away."[1]

For Luther's transformation, we learn, his friend's death and the fear caused by a peal of terrific lightning was responsible. Jacob Boeheme's transformation is, perhaps, the most wonderful of all. A small incident that occurred during the happy day after his marriage effects a complete transmutation in him. Having seen a lovely sight caused by the sun's reflection in a polished vessel, he forgets himself in ecstatic joy. He viewed, he says, the secret of the universe itself in that experience.

From all these instances it will be obvious that in the spiritual life of the seeker a distinctive and decisive stage occurs wherein we find the troubled anguish of his mind and its consequent transmutation. In the case of some seekers this change is sudden and unanticipated, in the case of others it is the result of constant and purposeful effort. But in either case it comes as a sort of rebirth. The Western mystics called it by a technical term, 'Purification'. In the initial stage of the Śaraṇas' Sixfold Hierarchy such a rebirth takes place.

Bhakta and Mahēśa—these two Sthalas are the first two stages in the Śaraṇas' mystic journey. What is known as Bhakti is the first step on the path of man's mental evolution. This variegated world, man's perpetual struggle for life therein, the

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1. Godwin, G., *The Great Mystics*

power that functions as driving impulse—upon all these the thinking mind ruminates. These are the fundamental things for the origin of religion. The Śaraṇas state that such questions must be faced and tested on the touchstone of reason, which leads to the birth of discrimination between the temporal and the eternal. They lament the ignorance of those who mistake the fleeting saṁsāra to be permanent. Under Bhakta-sthala, this Saṁsāra, when taken in its seeming form to be eternal, becomes vile and despicable. If, attempting to understand its real nature, one takes to spiritual exercise and training with the grace of a Guru, the mind's inertia disappears, the heart becomes pure, the goal of life clearly visible. Then one realises that everything that he has so far believed to be his own, belongs to the Power that has created it and made it play, and willingly surrenders his self at its feet. This is the first step on the ascent to the Divine and is known as Bhakta-sthala.

The peculiar characteristic of this way lies in that the Śaraṇas insist that the seeker must have, at the very start, a complete map of the path he is to follow. They believe that the spirit that pervades his entire body, through the Guru's grace, manifests itself as Iṣṭaliṅga on the palm. To find the divine perfection in it is the ultimate aim of their worship. For its attainment the bhakta need not turn away from his worldly life. But his outlook on it must be changed, and it does change. This is the transformation that needs to be effected in his life. This change mainly refers to the inner exercise—say the Śaraṇas. He still lives his worldly life as before, but as a consequence of the new change, the main purpose of his life has now altogether changed. He dedicates his body, mind and wealth to Guru, Liṅga and Jaṅgama ungrudgingly. Thereby he suppresses his ego. The Bhakta's bodily attributes, through zealous piety which tells that both the worshipper and the worshipped are one, begin to be transformed into divine attributes.

That is, we do not find in the Śaraṇas' way either a sudden unexpected change or a passionate impulse of emotion. There is the yearning of a devout heart and a spirit of atonement. But it is enriched by reason. A western scholar, while appraising

Chaitanya's pursuit of Bhakti, has expressed the following opinion :

"It is not a full and round type of religion ; because it does not encompass or satisfy the whole personality of man."[1] One of his charges against Chaitanya's path of Bhakti is :

"The first charge against the Bhakti experience of Chaitanya is one of intellectual feebleness."[2] His community prayers and the fervour of his city prayers conducted in the form of festivals are appropriate instances in point. But there is no scope for such charges in the Śaraṇas path of Bhakti. We notice in it a brave endeavour to utilise Bhakti for the perfect unfolding of all the powers of the personality.

Therefore, the sthala next higher to Bhakta-sthala is named Mahēśvara-sthala. We find in this sthala a constant effort to carry on ahead, through a single-pointed zeal, the conscious state of mind that was awakened in the Bhakta-sthala. "Come what may—fever or fortune—without inviting the one or spurning the other," he faces what comes and marches ahead overcoming it. He moulds the situation that he is placed in, in such a fashion as to suit his pursuit. Without being swept away by the force of Bhakti, he relies upon the touchstone of reason. His is a venture to undertake a pilgrimage to the divine 'riding a ready horse' without carrying the saddle on his back or refusing an offered horse. Even a jungle through his zeal turns into a town. His lofty ethical life shall become a model to society. Through

"The pledge not to covet
Others' wealth and wife,
Not to stretch his hand for graft or fraud ;
An enlightened living that burns passions out ;
A venture to explode the mystery of Nature,
And attain to the core of truth,"

he purges his mind of its stains and is, as it were, reborn.

He leads all his future life along the enlightened path and in the world of consciousness. All his doubts and tremors, his

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1. Melville Kennedy, T., *The Chaitanya Movement*
2. ibid.

hunger and yearning for the goal are now no more. The ethical life he was so far striving hard to lead is now become his normal way. The whole world appears in his eyes as an abode of God, as a Prasāda, or gift, of God. This is the third step in the Śaraṇa way of mysticism, known as Prasādi-sthala.

The Śaraṇas here have used the word Prasāda, as we have already seen in the second chapter, in a very comprehensive sense. It has mainly two facets in which its full meaning is brought out. 'The world is Śiva's Prasāda, or God's gift,' is its one sense. The word of Dēvara Dāsimayya, 'If I hug Thee in a warm embrace—that itself is real Prasāda,' echoes the same sense. Thus the descent of the Divine grace from above and the ascent of the seeker's aspiration for the Divine from below—with the union of these two, the Prasādi, or partaker of Prasāda, realises that his ideal will be accomplished.

The Śaraṇas have expounded, within the frame of the Veeraśaiva tradition, this lofty principle for the sake of popular practice. The Bhakta's offering of his body, mind and wealth at the feet of Guru, Liṅga and Jaṅgama helps towards his ascent. Even so, the divine grace descends through the triple aspect — Guru, Liṅga and Jaṅgama. This annihilates the seeker's sense of ego and assists him to win 'manaḥ prasāda', or psychic prasāda. That is, his mind itself becomes a prasāda. All pains and miseries disappear. The Prasādi-sthala accomplishes what is said in the lines of the *Gītā*: 'prasāde sarvaduḥkhanāṁ hānirasyōpajāyate,' or 'in that Peace the extinction of all pains ariseth for him.'

For the Prasādi, who has attained the divine eye of Prasādic mind, that sees the consciousness-force of Śiva everywhere in the world, nothing is worthless or mean on earth. High or low, good or bad does not lie in things but in the eyes that look. "The greed that hovers before the mind is Māyā." Our own outlook may turn them into lures of Māyā. "He who, removing the triple infection that clings to money, woman and land, can convert them into prasāda, is a real Prasādi in Kūḍalacenna Saṅgayya"—defines Cennabasavanna. He need not renounce life, nor run to the woods as an ascetic. Asceticism is only a state of the mind. He must live here in this life, and

yet attain the Divine without being bound by their life. He should transform all things of the world into willing instruments of his exercise. Such a one is a real Prasādi. Such a Prasāda issued from bhaktas that transcend Māyā is a great feast to Śiva beyond Māyā. The very life of a bhakta that transcends Māyā turns out to be a great Prasāda to Śiva. He who can offer such a Prasāda to Śiva is the Prasādi, the truth of which the seeker realises in this sthala.

We notice that in the Prasādi-sthala the seeker himself becomes the great Prasāda to Śiva, whereas in the Prāṇaliṅgi-sthala, the great Prasāda itself appears as an embodiment of Śiva to the non-differentiating eye. The searching eye of the Prasādi, that looks upward for Śiva's blessing, here turns within, having gained Śiva's Prasāda. The seeker realises that the all-pervasive and omnipresent Śiva is within himself, "even as an elephant is held in a mirror."

The psychic force that abides in his body is itself the Prāṇaliṅga. The Prāṇaliṅga itself has crystallized into Iṣṭaliṅga and come to his palm. Meditation upon the Iṣṭaliṅga must lead to meditation upon the Prāṇaliṅga. Ghaṭṭivāḷayya has given a very happy expression to this :

"You can sing a lullaby
For a child in the cradle ;
But could you for a child in the womb ?"

Thus, the spirit in aṅga is born as Iṣṭaliṅga, a child. The worship of this child is essential for the worship of the Prāṇaliṅga. It means, in brief, the mind must move, through worship of the external Liṅga, to the worship of the internal Prāṇaliṅga. As the bhakta physically worships the Iṣṭaliṅga through Śraddhā-bhakti, or zealous piety, he must intuitionally worship the Prāṇaliṅga through anubhava-bhakti, or mystic devotion. In the worship of the Prāṇaliṅga we see the process of the Śaraṇas' yogic discipline as well as an enunciation of Śivayoga, which incorporates all other yogas.

Allama Prabhu here describes the stature of the Prāṇaliṅgi:

"As a lotus in water, the Śaraṇa
Should be in the battle, yet be not.
When body is the base and Prāṇa the Liṅga,

What need of the Liṅga, for the Śaraṇa,
Round his neck, O Guhēśvara?"

The words "be in the battle, yet be not" reveal the mental state of a Prāṇaliṅgi. He is, yet is not, wears, yet wears not, worships yet worships not. Cennabasavanna's words make it clearer still :

"An experient of Liṅga needs
No help of Liṅga ;
What comes is peace,
And where he stands is his abode ;
For Kūḍalacenna Saṅga's Śaraṇa
There's neither this nor that."

The body of a Prāṇaliṅgi, through the experience of Liṅga, discards all traits of body and becomes a Liṅga-body, or divine body. Though he, too, like all other mortals, has a body, yet he plays with it unaffected by life's miseries, as a juggler "plays with a snake after extracting its fangs." Where he dwells becomes 'an abode of the Divine.' All he does becomes worship. Siddharāma says :

"If you ask me to pour
For bath, what shall I pour?
I've seen the Prāṇaliṅga within !
They pluck the outer flower
And worship the outer ;
But such a formal rite
I do not need.
How are they happy who know not
The worth of Self-experience?
Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna
Wants them not."

Hence the real bliss lies in realising the worth of divine experience. The Śaraṇa who, knowing it, has won the experience of Prāṇaliṅga, is a Prāṇaliṅgi.

We come across the term 'anubhāva,' or divine experience, in the Prāṇaliṅgi-sthala, and a specification that the seeker worships the Prāṇaliṅga through 'anubhava bhakti,' or mystic piety. The seeker resorts to one mode of piety in each sthala. 'Śraddhābhakti, (zeal in piety) in Bhakta-sthala, 'naisthika-

bhakti' (faith in piety) in Mahēśa-sthala, 'sāvadhāna-bhakti' (vigilance in piety) in Prasādi-sthala—thus bhakti goes on evolving into 'anubhava-bhakti' (mystic piety) in Prāṇaliṅgi-sthala. It means that, though bhakti is essential from the first step to the last of the Six-fold Hierarchy (ṣaṭsthala), yet, as the seeker advances in his discipline, the nature of bhakti too evolves. Afterwards it becomes ānanda-bhakti (joy in piety) in the Śaraṇa-sthala, and Samarasa-bhakti (piety of union) in Aikya-sthala, thus culminating in the consubstantial union of Liṅga and aṅga.

The Śaraṇa and Aikya are the two final sthalas on the Śaraṇa's mystic journey. It may be equivalent to what is termed by the Western mystics 'unitive love'. Here, it may be noted, the seeker has a direct vision of his ultimate goal and the joy of consubstantial union with It. If we notice the perfect consubstantial union of Liṅga and aṅga, or non-difference of Śiva and Jīva in the Aikya-sthala, the Śaraṇa-sthala is but a step below it.

The Śaraṇa knows that Śiva and himself are essentially the same. Yet he aspires to experience the joy that he derives by dedicating his all at His feet, and also to distribute the fruits of that joy to society. It is not enough if the seeker aims at his own liberation only, he must also become the source of social good. Cennabasavanna declares, "I say hail to the robed ones who pour water for the bath that all creatures may be happy." Siddharāma supports him :

"All worked and worked
For their own good,
Never for others', Lord !
All looked and looked
After their own good,
Never for others', Lord !
If they look after others' good,
Forgetting their own selves,
Joins them forsooth
Our Kapilasiddha Mallayya."

'To work for others' welfare forgetting self'—this is how an individual has to discharge his obligation to society.

If the Śaraṇa, who has climbed by constant effort up the Bhakta, Mahēśa, Prasādi and Prāṇaliṅgi ṣaṭsthalas, has set a great ideal before society, it acquires great significance and strength. If he is to become a model to others, he must first find out the true path. Otherwise it would be like a blind man leading another blind man. Therefore the Śaraṇas lived their lives as living examples to others, and, not being content with that much, attracted to their side seekers from all social levels including the lowly and the miserable. They endeavoured to uplift all, by standing at the level of each. Prabhu remarks :

"The world wrought its ruin
Not seeing what must be seen.
If they see what they must see
There is neither union nor parting.
The joy of non-parting from Thy vision and union
Thy Śaraṇas alone know, O Guhēśvara."

The Śaraṇas saw what they must and lived as they must, and so showed the way to the world.

Here the Śaraṇa surrenders himself as an instrument in the hand of God. Nothing which he claims as his own remains behind. As Śankarācārya puts it, "yadyat karma karōmi tattadakhilaṁ śaṁbhō tavārādhanaṁ", i. e., "whatever deed I do be it all Thy worship, O God"; every deed that the Śaraṇa does must become the worship of Śiva.

"Look you, the Śaraṇa's sleep is telling of beads ;
It's Śivarātri when he wakes and sits ;
Wherever he treads is holy ground ;
And Śiva doctrine whatever he speaks ;
The body of Kūḍala Saṅga's Śaraṇa
Is very Heaven !"

exclaims Basavanna. Cennabasavanna rejoins :

"For the Śaraṇa who knows,
Knowing the truth of Self,
That the Supreme is himself,
However he is, that is worship !
All the Śaraṇa enjoys is Śiva-dedicate,
All he eats is Prasāda ;

All he knows is the Supreme,
All he forgets is the highest joy,
All he talks is the Śiva-principle;
Śaraṇa himself is Kūḍalacenna Saṅgama."

In all such utterances we see the height of the Śaraṇa.

Since Śiva's consciousness itself has crystallised into Śaraṇa, Śiva is Lord and the Śaraṇa His spouse. Such a bridal relationship obtains in the Śaraṇa-sthala. It is, as between gold and its hue, between the gem and its lustre, integral, undifferentiated, impartite. Thus he who has become an embodiment of bhakti that is bliss undivided, is himself a Śaraṇa. He is:

"The Supreme with unswerving piety without fraud,"

"He who has shed desire, He who has spurned at gold,
He who is not subject to the sun's dawn,"

"The men who are absorbed
Within the truth of the Supreme
Rejoicing not in the words I and Thou."

Such are the words we come across in plenty in vacana literature that speaks of the Śaraṇa's eminence.

The last is the Aikya-sthala. It is the highest achievement of the Śaraṇa's mystic way. The direct vision of the truth that he has been so far yearning for, now becomes part of his normal state. Not only that, he becomes Itself. In the chapter on the Śaraṇa Philosophy and Discipline we have already seen the nature of mysticism from the height that Basavēśvara, Prabhu, Akkamahādēvi and such others had attained. Bearing it in mind, we may now try in a few words to get a clear idea of its ultimate shape. Cennabasavēśvara says:

"Body having touched
Body ceased to be;
Mind having touched
Mind ceased to be;
Money having touched
Money ceased to be;
Will having touched
Will ceased to be:
For this reason, O Kūḍalacenna Saṅga Lord,
Śaraṇa lost himself in Thee."

The Śaraṇa, having lost his body, mind and will, becomes integrally one with Śiva – this characterises the unitive state.

"Infinite the bliss of seeing Thee,
Infinite the bliss of loving Thee.
I gaze at Thee, with all
My billion hairs transformed to eyes !
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
Gazing and gazing at Thee,
As love was born in my heart,
The many marks of love stood out."

"Ever since the fellowship of Love has ceased,
I've known no other fellowship, O Lord !
Now that I've loved Thee so, parting is hard :
Hearken to me, O king of the smiling face,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
I'll break Thy heart and enter it !"

Thus Basavēśvara was one who penetrated the heart of Kūḍala Saṅga, rejoiced to contemplate Him and love Him. Cennabasavanna has described such an experience :

"Guru, the huntsman, bent the bow
Of discipline in tying thereto
The string of thought ;
When, fixing the arrow, his disciple,
He shot it at the target of the Void
That Liṅga is, he pierced it till
The feathers sank out of sight.
Could one look for
The target and that shaft in Thee,
O Kūḍala Cenna Saṅga ?"

The shaft called discipline touches the target of the Formless Liṅga, loses itself therein, finally becoming Itself. As Prabhu puts it, it is as if :

"You had shot a waxen dart
Into a pile of burning coal," or

"A mount of camphor has caught fire."

Space turns spaceless.

"When I installed
The Prāṇaliṅga on the body's throne
And worshipped with the touch
Of Meditation's hand, by slow degrees
The world that had enveloped me
Dissolved into the void, perished
The difference of Thou and I,
And union with the Real Liṅga occurred
In Soḍḍaḷa, Most Bountiful"—

says Soḍḍaḷa Bācarasa. Sakalēśa Mādarasa has echoed the same here :

"Well Sir, all wicks that touch the light
Are turned to light themselves ;
All streams that touch the sea
Themselves are turned to sea ;
All objects touched by Grace are turned
To Grace itself ;
All Aṅgas touched by Liṅga
Are turned to Liṅga...
O Sakalēśvara Lord, all men
That have touched Thee become
As Thou !"

Thus, like a light touching another light, the Śaraṇa too becomes light. As Prabhu says, the Śaraṇa "lives in an integral union without rift or fissure, free from death or suffering." This is the unitive state. This is the supreme realisation that the Śaraṇa mystic way can accomplish.

Special Characteristics of the Śaraṇas

The Śaraṇas' mystic path points to the ultimate height that man can reach, growing into fullness through six steps, from Bhakta-sthala to Aikya-sthala. It is the fruit of the pursuit of Sādhakas who have seen life steadily and seen it whole. An individual is a part, and must live in the midst, of a society. He must redeem himself by his own efforts. He is thus a social as well as an individual being. The two are not contradictory to each other but complementary. But there was a time when

philosophy and society looked repugnantly at each other. It was spiritually a period of our lowest degradation, a time when the Upanishadic doctrine, 'kuruvannēveha karmani jijīviṣēcchataṁ samāḥ'[1] was completely forgotten. At such juncture the Śaraṇas, through their integral vision and life, bridged this gulf and popularised a path that was able to incorporate the here and the hereafter.

As Maggeya Māyidēva states in his Śivādhava Śataka:

"The Śaraṇa,
With senses merged within the Form of Sense
With mind merged in the Mind,
With reason merged in the Higher Reason
United with the Self,
With pleasure merging in the Form of Pleasure,
Having attained the state
Of freedom from the cloak,
Dispassionate, disembodied, without taint,
O Lord of Pārvati !"[2]

It means that the Śaraṇas' body, mind, intellect, senses and their objects, shall be absorbed into Liṅga's body, mind, intellect, senses and their objects. That Śivayōgi, freed from the gross inertia of Māyā and being purged himself of hatred and passions, is now perfectly untainted. Again:

"Even where he speaks or looks,
Divert himself or handles a thing,
Where he enjoys himself or tastes a joy,
Or leaves his body behind,
When once the union has occurred
With Liṅga-light and Liṅga quality
And the Liṅga Absolute,
How can I name this great-souled one,
O Lord of Pārvati?"[3]

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1. *Iśopaniṣad* — Always performing works here one should wish to live a hundred years.
2. *Satakatraya* — Maggeya Māyidēva
3. ibid,

It means that he is the Śaraṇa who believes that, while talking, seeing, playing, receiving a thing, enjoying a thing and dying—on all these occasions Mahāliṅga is his master and he has nothing of his own, and experiences the joy of partaking of Liṅga Prasāda.

Thus we clearly witness, in the Śaraṇas' mystic way, the secret of living in the world "though living yet unbound, though moving yet unpolluted." From Bhakta-sthala to Aikya-sthala this secret evolves, step by step, in accordance with the seeker's standard of attainment at each stage.

In the Bhakta-sthala the seeker's mind grieves to see the evanescence of the world; and it must grieve. Because it is essential for his next step. In certain awakened souls this anguish starts of its own accord. They may call out, yearning for the unseen Power, "Lord, O Lord, 'I call and call' " or pine,

> "Why did you give me birth,
> To travail on this earth
> A stranger unto Heaven?
> Why did you give me birth?
> Hear me, Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama,
> Could you not well have made
> A tree or bush instead?"

or grieve,

> "Saṁsāra chases and plagues me
> What shall I do, O Lord!
> What shall I do!"

But in the ordinary run of mankind such a feeling appears occasionally yet presently vanishes as a flash of lightning, and again they hanker after the fleeting pleasures of life. This divine discontent has to be roused in them. They have to be cautioned, "What you call life is a wind-blown lamp." The evanescence of life has to be pointed out to them very often with such sayings as 'like a mouse ensconced in piles of bags,' 'like a frog caught in a serpent's mouth', who, hungry, pines for a flitting fly, 'as a vowed sheep brought for a festival nibbles the tender leaves meant for the festoon'. This is not to make them frustrated in and abstracted from life. Just because this Saṁsāra is transient,

or the body is evanescent, is it vile or despicable? For through the temporal alone must the eternal be attained. Moulding what is temporary for life's prosperity, and therethrough, must we realise the Ultimate Truth, must we turn soil itself into gold. To this aspect the Śaraṇas have given a special emphasis in their mystic way.

We notice that this spirit grows from each sthala to the next. Basavanna observes that only when the garden is weeded out does the plant of life grow fresh and green :

"Destruction's weed is born
In a field of standing corn ;
It clouds my understanding,
It lulls my brain asleep !
O Father Liṅga, pluck
This weed, my vice,
That my shoot burst again
And I may grow, O Lord
Kūḍala Saṅgama !"

Again :

"They laugh at you, O Lord,
Whenever, to give me birth,
You set me down to earth
And say, 'Be born !'
I've lost my way, Lord Hara ;
Make me to walk in Śiva's path !
Show me the way !
Forlorn I cry : 'Hear me, O Saints,
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Is making sport of me !' "

This bhakta's mind's anguish, by the time he rises to the top of Bhakta-sthala, realises the secret of finding the eternal in the temporal. His limited sense of ego perishes :

"It is my fault if I should eat
From pride of what I am. . .
If I feel hurt at praise or scorn,
I am far from the Guhēśvaraliṅga who is
Upon my palm,
O Saṅgana Basavanna !"

"To the Bhakta who does,
His heart itself is a witness thereunto ;
Why should I bear the space going out ?
If your having done
Without the sense of I,
Pine not in your heart
There abides undimmed
Ambiga Caudayya Himself."

"They talk of body and non-body,
But they know not its key.
To say 'I' is body,
To say 'I am a slave' is non-body.
As it is said :
'Bhakta's body is non-body'
I call them non-bodied
In Kūḍala Cenna Saṅgayya,
Who have annihilated their ego."

In these vacanas, it may be noticed, the Śaraṇas have given greater prominence to the extirpation of the ego. As ego vanishes, the seeker's mind itself undergoes change and sways itself towards a greater Power. Anything that he can claim as his does not remain at all. Surrendering all to Guru, Liṅga, and Jaṅgama, he partakes of everything that is returned by them as their Prasāda.

The seeker, who had set such a great ideal before him in Bhakta-sthala, marches on with an unflinching resolve to accomplish it in Mahēśvara-sthala. The Śaraṇas have given high priority to the single-pointed faith. Notice how they stress its necessity :

"When you have no trust and faith,
Of what avail is all your
Reading and hearing and counting of beads ?
It is fruitless but not negotiating with the Ideal.
Therefore worship of God with faith matured,
Heart fulfilled and belief seized —
That itself is Akhaṇḍēśvaraliṅga's grace."

"Love and win Him
You cannot unless you do.
Leap not to several twigs, you fool!
He tests you — expelling, touching
Kicking and crusting —
If you budge not from faith
Even after all these,
He gives you Himself, Mahāliṅga Kalmēśvara."

"My piety has been as one
Who has trained
Three hundred and sixty days
And, when he must enter the ring,
Forgotten all his holds!
What did it help to do
The Liṅga-rites for many a day,
If there was no steadfastness
Within my mind?
Can I, O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
Spill a bucket full of milk
And mop it back again?"

This is the peculiar power which shapes itself in the same Mahēśvara-sthala. The Mahēśvara, who has advanced in the path of faith, totally surrenders himself to the unflinching ideal before him. He himself turns out to be the grace of that power. He enjoys life in the spirit that the whole universe is the Prasāda of that Power.

"Śaraṇa should neither want
Nor should he refuse.
Nor disregard what is come
Therefore, O Kūḍalacenna Saṅga Lord,
They are hungry having eaten,
Celibate having indulged —
Thy Śaraṇas!!"

Such is the seeker's height. To live in the faith that the body that serves that wealth that is offered and the mind that is dedicated — all these are His. Such is his way of life. Thus we

notice that in the Bhakta, Mahēśa and Prasāda sthalas the seeker's power evolves it slowly but steadily.

The same outlook, in Prāṇaliṅgi-sthala, stretches wider and wider still and becomes profound like a sea. Here is the union of Bhakti, Jñāna and Karma and a synthesis of all yogas. It has emerged from the path which all, although in the midst of Saṁsāra, can nonetheless follow. It may be called Śivayoga. The Śaraṇas have realised through Śivayoga an easy way by which all the hard disciplines of yoga must evolve themselves into normal habits.

There is plenty of discussion on the nature of Śivayoga in the Śaraṇas' vacanas. They have vividly expounded how it differs from Rājayoga.

"This is the Supreme Rājayoga
Of Nija Guru Svatantra Siddhaliṅgēśvara
To twine the running wind
Into a single cord,
To steady the mind
And spend it out
In meditation upon the Form ;
To abide in the Formless,
And as meditation upon It grows more and more,
For the Form to vanish into the Formless
And the mind itself to lose itself
In the Formless Reality."

Thus, that the Form should merge in the Formless and the mind should dwindle in the Formless, is Rājayoga. Rājayoga enlists the eight steps—yama, or abstinence, niyama or observance, praṇāyāma, or breath-control, pratyāhāra, or withdrawal of the senses from objects, dhyāna, or meditation, dhāraṇa, or concentration, and samādhi, or trance — as aids. Śivayoga has embodied the last three.

Maggeya Māyidēva, in his Śivādhavaśataka, states :

"In the utterance of the Guru,
Who established on first principles
That
In the eightfold yoga there be two parts —

The latter and the first;
The three, including concentration, is
The latter; the fivefold one
With yama and the following ones,
Is first . . . What use, then, to speak
Of these in respect of those
Who are engaged in Vīraśaiva yoga
O Lord of Parvati?"[1]

In the eightfold yoga, yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma and pratyāhāra are known as the former part; dhyāna, dhāraṇa and samādhi, the latter part. For those who are engaged in Śivayoga the latter part is its essence. That is, the Śaraṇas did not regard yama, niyama, etc. as parts of yoga. They come as part of the preliminary preparation. The last three are essential to Śivayoga. Even those three too undergo a complete transmutation.

"The worship of the heart
Is Meditation; the outer worship
Is Concentration; Trance is
The action which includes
Both radiant worship and meditation
On one's own Liṅga.
The proper order is this:
When one can gaze on this
With Knowledge of Śambhu,
The Ultimate place is clear
As is the fruit of the bilva-tree
One holds in hand, O Lord of Pārvati!"[2]

Saying thus, Māyideva describes the place of dhyāna, dhāraṇa, samadhi in Śivayoga. Worship of Prāṇaliṅga is itself meditation, worship of Iṣṭaliṅga, concentration, and remembrance of Bhāvaliṅga itself is trance. It always places the sādhaka, says Māyidēva, in that state. Thus, as Tōṇṭada Siddhaliṅgāyati observed, at every step there is a necessity of Iṣṭa, Prāṇa and Bhāva in the Śivayoga.

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1. Śatakatraya (Maggeya Māyidēva)
2. ibid.

"The Supreme consciousness divine, itself
That abides in Brahmarandhra as Sound and Spirit,
As Guru drawing out installed it in will, mind and palm,
Is deemed on Iṣṭaliṅga of the nature of Being in will;
Knowing the secret of how one Thing has become Iṣṭa,
Prāṇa and Bhāva
In body, mind and will, seizing Iṣṭaliṅga with eye,
Prāṇaliṅga through mind, Trptiliṅga through will—
Practising in conformity with the triple Liṅga,
Uniting with and identifying Liṅga with Self—
To rivel thus, is Sivayoga, mark
O Great Guru Śiva Siddhēśvara Prabhu"—he describes Śiva thus.

The Guru draws out the spirit or the conscious Force that pervades the entire body, and enthrones it in will, mind and eye in the form of Bhāvaliṅga, Prāṇaliṅga and Iṣṭaliṅga. That is, he not only places Liṅga in the form of Iṣṭa but wakes up meditation upon its nature in the seeker's breath and will. Therefore it would become possible for the seeker to realise his Self through Iṣṭaliṅga. So the mirror that reflects his Self is Iṣṭaliṅga. Maggeya Māyidēva has beautifully put it:

"Is the mind of a woman, who looks
Into a mirror, where she sees
Her lovely form,
The fascinating dear form she owns,
Endowed with surpassing beauty
And airs and graces?
Or is it in the mirror where she looks?
She looks at herself. Thus the Śaraṇa
Looks at himself within
The mirror of observance,
Worship and experience
Of Liṅga, O Lord of Parvati!"[1]

As a woman looks into a mirror only to see her beauty, the Śaraṇas look into the mirror of Liṅga to realise their own Self,

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1. ibid.

observes Māyidēva. It means that Iṣṭaliṅga-worship does not stop at itself but leads on to meditation upon Prāṇaliṅga and Bhāvaliṅga, by which the triple impurity of the triple body perishes. So in the process of meditation upon the triple Liṅga, it may be noticed, the steps of Rājayoga are being moulded so as to conform to Śivayoga.

There is no need to explain in detail the reference, in Rājayoga, to yama; "ahiṁsā satyāstēya brahmacaryāparigrahā yamaḥ", and to niyama;' "śauca saṁtōṣa tapaḥ svādhyā īsvara praṇidhānanani niyamāḥ", or (*yama* is non-violence, truthfulness, honesty, chastity and renunciation of property; *niyama* is purity, joy, austerity, independent study and meditation upon God). We have already seen the trend of their thought and their ethical ideal set in respect of an individual as well as society.

Āsana means a sitting posture. One may recollect here the words of the Gītā:

"samaṁ kāya śirōgrīvaṁ dhārayannacalaṁ sthiraḥ!
saṁprēkṣya nāsikāgraṁ svaṁ diśaścanāvalōkayan!!"

i e., "Holding the body and head erect, immovably steady, looking fixedly at the point of the nose, with unseeing gaze"—the practicant should sit. This is essential to wake up the powers latent in the body. But here the Śivayogi need not look at the point of the nose. "Settling Iṣṭaliṅga firmly in his left palm, restraining the traffic of his other limbs, restraining the movement of breath through breath-control, or prāṇāyāma, controlling the modifications of the mind, focussing his physical eye on Iṣṭaliṅga, his inner eye on Prāṇaliṅga, and his intuitional eye on Bhāvaliṅga, being one with Liṅga and unifying the triple Liṅga into one—he lives his own Self." This itself is Śivayoga.[1]

It may be seen how, although the Śaraṇas gave prominence to yoga they yet moulded it to their own way, their yoga is not the yoga of an isolated being who has cut off all associations. It is a yoga of synthesis whereby one attains detachment in the midst of all attachments. Here it serves as a link that joins knowledge and work:

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1. Nandimath, S. C., in *Viraśaivatattva Prakāsha*—"*Yōga and Viraśaivism.*"

"It is impious to get to the woods
In order to have nobody's association.
Obligation to men if one lives in the village;
Obligation to trees if one lives in the woods;
The Śaraṇa who, offering what is come to Liṅga,
Partakes of it is wise, O Sakalēśvara."

The Śaraṇas who said this, ever living in the world, without saying 'yes or no', 'not disregarding the joy that is come', being 'observers of fast after having eaten, celibates after having indulged' in sex-pleasure, practised spiritual, or more accurately, Śivayogic exercises.

The synthesis is the highest attainment that the mystic way might accomplish. That through collective practice each Śaraṇa could attain to that height is the speciality of the mysticism of the Śaraṇas. The term Śaraṇas' 'anubhāva' indicates the same. Though it constitutes the sense and meaning of the terms 'Brahma sākṣhātkāra', or Brahma realisation, 'Brahmānubhūti', or perception of Brahma, mystic experience, some other specific meaning, which is not found in these terms, grows out of it. It is this, that the path which utilises the world itself as a means to Self-realisation is the Śaraṇa Mystic Way—to find Śiva in everything in the world and to find the fundamental basis of all in one's own heart, and finally oneself to become the Ultimate Thing Itself. This is 'Anubhāva Mārga', or the Mystic Way.

Prof. Ranade, while appraising the age of Nāmadēva among the mystics of Maharashtra, writes:

"The tailor, the barber, the maid-servant, the gardener, the goldsmith, even the nautch girl, could all realise God, in their different stations of life. But as to whether they could continue in a rightful performance of their duties in the state of God-realisation is a different question. It seems that saints gave themselves up to God and forgot everything else before it."[1] Here we notice that all who were following different vocations like that of a tailor or a barber turned out to be

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1. Ranade, R. D., *Mysticism in Maharashtra*

seekers. But Ranade states that all of them could not continue to follow their former vocations after they took to the mystic path, whereas the Śaraṇas, it is found, have fully succeeded in accomplishing the two.[1] Haḍapada Appaṇṇa remained a barber to the end. Maḍivāḷa Mācayya never gave up his occupation of washerman. Even so, Mōḷige Mārayya (faggot-gatherer), Nuliya Candayya (rope-maker), Mādara Cennayya (scavenger), Ḍōhara Kakkayya (tanner), Āyadakki Mārayya (rice-grain gatherer), Bhaṇḍāri Saṅtayya (curator of Mss. library), Aṁbigara Cauḍayya (oarsman), Śivalenka Mancaṇṇa (Śiva's lackey), Kaṁbhada Mārayya, (oilman), Rāyasada Mancaṇṇa (scribe), Bokkasada Saṅgaṇṇa (treasurer), Pākada Bhimayya (cook), Vaidya Saṅgaṇṇa (ayurvedist), Mēdara Kētayya (basket-maker), Dhakkeya Bommaṇṇa (drummer), Turugāhi Rāmaṇṇa (cowherd), Suṅkada Bankanna (toll-keeper), Okkalu Muddayya (farmer), Talwār Kāmidēva (village watchman), Gāṇada Kaṇṇappa (oilman)-Sūjikāyakada Rāmitaṅde (tattooer), Bācikāyakada Basappa (carpenter), Sattige Kāyakada Rāmitaṅde (umbrella-holder), Kaṇṇaḍikāyakada Ammidēvayya (mirror-maker), Kadiru' kāyakada Remmavve (spinner), Siṁpiganāda Śaṅkaradāsimayya (tailor), Akkaśāliganāda Kinnari Bommaṇṇa (goldsmith), Sainika Jodharamadanna (soldier), Malaharakāyakada Cikkadēvayya (mender of junk), Koṭṭaṇada Remmavve (paddy-pounder)—instances of such Śaraṇas may be considered. All these remained in their own station of life up to the end, yet realised Śivayoga. They did not find it necessary to dispense with their kāyaka for the sake of mystic attainment. They raised their kāyaka itself to the height of mysticism.

The Śaraṇa mystic way is not a path in which the seeker derives joy from singing and dancing in emotional exuberance. Nor is it dry speculation and hair-splitting leading to the Vivartavāda, or the Theory of Illusion which says that the world is all Māyā, or myth. The Śaraṇas did not consider mere sentiment as bhakti, or a feat of the intellect as knowledge. They looked into the true essence of bhakti and jñāna. Reason

1. It may be noticed that at the time of Ekanāth it seems to have become partially possible in Maharashtra.

must check emotion, and emotion must illumine reason. The Śaraṇa path synthesized the two.

In this context we should call to mind Sant Kabir and his Nirguṇa panth. The Nirguṇa panth does not admit of either image worship or emotional devotion to it. It may be seen in his own words:

"The images are lifeless,
They cannot speak;
I know, for I have cried aloud to them."[1]

What he means thereby is that the concept of the Divine must go beyond the images. The seeking eye must look within.

"O! servant, where dost thou seek me,
Lo! I am beside thee;
I am neither in temple, nor in mosque;
I am neither in Kaaba, nor in Kailāsa."[2]

Thus says the Divinity. It is the breath of our being, says Kabir.

Even the ideal of his worship, Rama, is not our Rama the incarnate.

"The three worlds speak of the son of Dasharatha; but the implications of Rama are other than that,"[3] is the theory of Kabir. The Nirgunapanthis do not accept the concept of the incarnations of Rāma, Krishna and such others. They say it gives scope to the worship of individuals. Kabir observes:

"Neither did he take birth in the house
of Dasharatha, nor put to trouble
the King of Lanka;
Neither did he enter the womb of Devaki,
nor was he fondled in her lap
by Yashoda."[4]

But in the Vaiṣṇavite pursuit of Bhakti, the concept of incarnation and image worship form its essence. Giving a form to the Divinity, conceiving him in relationships of various order,

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1. Rabindranath Tagore (Tr.), *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*
2. ibid.
3. Bharathwal, *Nirguṇa School of Hindi Poetry*
4. ibid.

loving it—the bhakta enjoys the joy of Bhakti differentiating himself from the Divinity. This is the ideal of Vaiṣṇavite bhakti. In Chaitanya of Bengal, in Tukaram of Maharashtra as well as in the Dāsas of Karnataka we find worship of the personal God in a variety of ways.

Viṣṇu, an embodiment of the Ultimate Absolute, incarnates here as Rāma and Krishna and uplifts his bhaktas through his own sport. He strives to seek the relationship of God—in the form of a son, a master, a friend, a husband himself, as a mother, servant and a wife. In the path of Dāsas like Purandhara all these approaches may be seen.

Ānjaneya's servant-piety, Arjuna's friend-piety, Yeshodhara's filial piety, Rādhā's bridal piety—these are all their ideals.

"Make me Thy slave,
Veṅkaṭaramaṇa, my Lord
Of thousand names."

When he thus implores like a servant :

"Is it proper to go
To Madhura, O Madhava ?
I bend to Thee, O Lord,
How can I stand
Thy separation, even a moment,
O Madhava, Mura's destroyer,
Who rolls on serpent bed ?"

When he thus longs for Him as a wife :

"I do not believe that you are
A mine of mercy."

When he remonstrates as a friend :

"When, O when, do I
Hug Raṅgayya in my arms !
When do I hug and fondle Him !
When do I listen to His sweet words
To my heart's content, O When !"

When he kisses and caresses Him with motherly affection—all these shades of the heart are made manifest.

Through these feelings, nine modes of bhakti like śravaṇa

and kīrtana, or hearing and singing hymns of praise; a single-pointed zeal and absolute surrender, the Dāsas' bhakti grows into its fullness; they have the vision of their chosen deity. The Self-same personal God appears to each in the form in which he or she worships. Ranga appears to them as—

"A wreath of fresh-petalled Tulasi,
The scintillating lustre of sapphire,
Like a parrot gleaming in a cage..."

"A ruby crown on his head,
His forehead made beautiful
With a mark of musk,
His fingers playing on a flute,
His glances darting sideways
To right and left of Kaustubha."

The Dāsas' concept of the Divine is always Lakṣhmi's Lord, eagle-riding, sleeping on the snake-bed, etc., personal and having a form. So is their realisation too.

The liberated state described by the Dāsas conforms to the dvaita-siddhānta they relied upon. "Between matter, life and god there exists an absolute spiritual difference, and it persists even in the liberated state,"— affirm the Dāsas.[1] Śri Vādirāja has described the characteristics of the liberated and of the four-fold liberation (caturvidha mukti) as follows:

"The liberated shine refulgent with crown upon their head, clad in yellow robe, a necklace with an amulet round their neck, bracelets on their wrists—thus decked with glistening ornaments. They have four arms which glow with conchshell, wheel, and other weapons. They do not have Śrīvatsa and Kaustubha stones. These are exclusively reserved for Viṣṇu. Even in the liberated state the souls remain different and at a distance from Hari. Their difference may be seen from the services they offer."

There are four classes of mukti—Sāyujya, or joined with Him, Sālōkya, or in the same heaven as His, sāmīpya, or close to Him, and sārūpya, or of the same form as His. Sāyujya

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1. Panchamukhi, *Karnataka Haridasa Sahitya*

mukti is meant for the angels; they dwell in the body of Hari. Sālōkya muktas dwell in Hari's heaven. Sāmīpya mukti denotes mukti of dwelling in the ocean of nectar that circles Hari's heaven. In all respects, except for the Śrīvatsa and the Kaustubha stone, the mukti of attaining to Hari's form is known as Sārūpya mukti. This Sārūpya is meant for all the liberated. However, it is supposed to be a different mukti in the sense that the other liberated have sāyujya as well as sārūpya, whereas these have sārūpya only—this is the Dāsa concept of Mukti.[1]

But in respect of Nirguṇapanthis like Kabir, the concept of the Divine and the nature of attainment are entirely different from the Dāsa concept. They do not admit the principle of incarnation at all. They worship only the impersonal aspect of God. And He will appear to them in the same aspect. The actual realisation of the Divine dispels all doubts of the seeker and astounds him into silence by an inexpressible experience. He does not look at It with a physical eye nor does he see Its personal aspect in form. He knows the perfect nature of the Truth through intuitional experience that comes and goes, but it remains as his enduring wealth and an inseparable part of his life. Losing the feeling of parts, it becomes one undivided whole. The Nirguṇapanthis have no faith in momentary realisation that certain seekers talk of; real self-realisation is never momentary; it is an eternal Light that can remove all doubts of life at one stroke.

This view is much closer to the Śaraṇas' mysticism. But, unlike the Dāsas, the Śaraṇas do not accept an absolute difference between Jīva and Śiva in mukti too; nor do they, unlike the Nirguṇapanthis, assert that the Impersonal alone is an ideal of worship. As already seen, the Śaraṇa way has found a synthesis between difference and non-difference, Form and Formlessness, the Personal and Impersonal aspects of God, and has brought about unity and harmony between these pairs. Mahādēviyakka speaks of the immanent aspect of the Divine:

"Even as a treasure hidden underground,
As savour lurking in a fruit,

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1. ibid.

As gold in stone, as oil in sesamum
As fire is hidden in the wood,
Or Brahma in the heart,
No one can know how great
Cenna Mallikarjuna is ;

and finds in her pilgrim path the omnipresence of the Divine that abides in the wood in the trees therein, in the birds and beasts that sport in it. She, God's spouse, realises the sublimity of her Lord :

"The hunger of my eyes is now appeased,
Seeing the radiant form
That lights the fourteen worlds
With the splendour of His eyes ;
His ruddy shining hair,
His white teeth and His comely ruby crown,
His smiling countenance !
The Great One have I seen today
Who lords it over lords and lords
As if they were His wives !
Seeing the majesty
Of Cenna Mallikārjuna, the great Guru who,
In union with the primordial power, speaks,
I have been saved !"

As she advances still further, discarding even the sense of lord and spouse, she becomes her own self.

"While still in body's company,
I have become Liṅga's companion ;
While still in Liṅga's company,
I have become body's companion.
Transcending the company of both,
I have attained to peace.
After forgetting this clamour of words,
What if there be
No separation any more ?
Once I am joined
To Lord Cenna Mallikārjuna,
I do not recognise myself
As anything !"

Thus, the pilgrimage which started with difference (dvaita) between Aṅga and Liṅga, consummates in the consubstantial union of the two, or non-difference (advaita). In the seeker's several stages this sense of difference is necessary. But in the end, all having shed this sense, they end in the one and only ocean.

There Śiva shall be Śūnya, or the Absolute that transcends all. This Śūnya is not used in the sense of negation of everything, or nihilism. It is the glorious Absolute that is all-inclusive and all-pervasive, yet to the limited eye appears to be non-existence. Śiva is at once Girijā Śaṅkara (personal aspect of God) and Niranjana, or the Immaculate (impersonal aspect of God), the Word incarnate as well as one who transcends nāda, bindu and kalā. "He is Umāpati, or Umā's Lord, when engaged in the cosmic play, the Self-begotten when the play ceases"—says Prabhu. The Śaraṇa, in his spiritual discipline, never forgets that, though Śiva might appear to him as Umā's Lord, yet He is ever the Svayaṁbhu, or the Self-begotten, in principle. He knows from the beginning that, though he now worships Him as Bhakta, yet he is himself bound to become ultimately an integral part of Paraśiva. Such a consciousness, which he has in the Bhakta-sthala, shall become his actual experience when he attains to the Aikya-sthala. Thus, the six-fold hierarchy achieves non-difference in difference and a synthesis of difference and non-difference.

Therefore, the Śaraṇa way turns out to be the Path that incorporates all other paths of divine experience. Every seeker's mental bent is invested with his personal peculiarities. There is encouragement for all. But the path which endeavours to achieve unity in diversity is the Śaraṇa path. The radical renunciation of Prabhu, the seer, the bhakti treasure of Basavēśvara (the 'Saṁsāric yōgi'), the quintessence of philosophy of Cennabasavaṇṇa, the Jñānayogi, Siddharāmayya's Karmayoga, the unassuming modesty and unflinching faith of Śaraṇas like Mārayya and Mācayya—all evolve themselves in the Śaraṇa mystic way. The Six-fold Hierarchy embodies all these.

The Śaraṇa way, as it gave patronage and nourishment to radical ascetics like Akkamahādēvi, also showed light to chaste

souls like Mōḷige Mārayya's wife, Mahādēvamma, and Āyadakki Mārayya's wife, Lakkamma. The Śaraṇa way has the unique power to mould itself to suit each seeker, irrespective of sex, to practise it in his or her own station of life and according to his or her own bent of mind and standard of spiritual attainment.

The Śaraṇas not only proclaimed but actually demonstrated that there is no room for sex difference in matters spiritual. Dēvara Dāsimayya writes :

> "If breast and braid appear
> They call it a woman ;
> If beard and moustache appear
> They call it a man.
> The soul that lurks within
> Is neither male nor female,
> Mark, O Rāmanātha !"

In the path of Self-realisation both have equal status. For, life's ultimate aim for both is one and the same.

On several occasions, we notice, woman has been condemned as a big hurdle in the way to spiritual attainment. There is no dearth of persons who have believed that contempt of woman is the first step of asceticism. Even a great saint like Kabir has, at one place, called woman 'a hellish well'.[1] But the Śaraṇas' view of woman is a lofty one, an ideal one. Woman did not appear as Māyā to their eyes, but rather as Primordial Power, as the Mother of the World. Owing to false notions she might appear to be Māyā, a thing of enjoyment. Once the outlook becomes pure and holy, she appears as Ādiśakti, or Primordial Power, or Divine Consciousness. We have already noticed the epigrammatic saying of Prabhu in this respect—"Woman is not Māyā. . . the lust that hovers before the mind is Māyā." When you look at her after tearing off the veil of lust before the mind she is neither a thing of enjoyment nor a thing fit to be damned. Standing shoulder to shoulder with man in the battle of life, she is one who can assist him in his march towards the same goal. That is why the Śaraṇas have not considered married life as

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1. Bharathwal, *Nirguṇa School of Hindi Poetry*

detrimental to spiritual pursuit. Let alone the views of married persons like Basavaṇṇa, even a severe ascetic like Prabhu has upheld this view:

"When the couple stands
Being one in spirit,
As the two eyes focus on the seen,
It becomes dedicate to Guheśvaraliṅga."

"Woman is just woman not,
Woman is no ogress:
Verily, woman is Kapilasiddha Mallikarjuna Himself,"

affirms Siddharāma.

In the social structure set up by the Śaraṇas woman had such a holy position. Several women saints, being encouraged by that order, attained to lofty spiritual heights. Lakkamma, Mahādēvi, Kāḷavve, Goggavve, Nīlāmbika, Satyakka, Nīlalōcane, Remmavve — all, living a married life and following their humble occupations, accomplished their ideal.

More than all these, Akka Mahādēvi's life and attainment are unique of their kind. She lived in the firm faith that Mallikārjuna himself was her Lord. In her bridal piety the philosophical background of the Śaraṇas' mysticism developed into perfection.

This bridal piety is found in the seekers of all climes and times. Experts say that the sex instinct, or libido, that is at the root of man, is its basis. But that instinct, when freed from selfish physical enjoyment, is sublimated and converts itself into bridal piety. On some other occasions, it is seen, on the basis of the ordinary sexual instinct and relying on mortal love, an attempt is made to realise immortal love. Among such the Islamic Sufism, and Sahajism fashioned from an offshoot of Buddhism, may be named.[1]

In Sufism, mortal love is regarded as the bridge that leads to Divine love. We must love beauty. That love is, in the first instance, only physical. It may be sensual as well. But it does not stop there. They caution:

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1. Radha Kamal Mukherjee, *Theory and Art of Mysticism*

"Unless one knows earthly affection one cannot reach ideal love; but mere earthly love is barren."[1]

A Persian poet, Jami by name, has echoed the same:

"Though in this world a hundred tasks thou trust, it is love alone from thyself will save thee. Even from earthly love thy face avert not, since to the real it may serve to raise thee."[2] Through love one experiences the beauty of nature. Beauty may be in a rose, in the sun and the moon, in a woman's lovely hair, in wine or in a lavern. Through the worship of the beauty of all these, states the Sufi doctrine, it is possible to accomplish perfect love.[3]

In the special system called 'Sahaja' which has grown out of Buddhism, too, we find another aspect of this sensual beauty. It boldly proclaims that liberation is possible through mutual love between man and woman, but cautions that only a few can attain it. The man and woman who love each other must be pure and unsullied. Neither a woman who has loved an unworthy man, nor a man who has loved an unworthy woman, can redeem themselves. Though mutual love between man and woman may be, to start with, physical, it must gradually cross the limits and go ahead — asserts the Sahaja system, and suggests the various ways of attaining it.

What we see in these Sufi and Sahaja systems is that, through the mortal love of man and woman, Divine love can be attained. Generally, as one of the ways of Bhakti, we find bridal piety, in which the seeker, assuming the role of wife with God as husband, offers love to God. Or he may conceive God as his master, friend, son or father. This mode of bhakti is seen in all seekers of all times and climes. In one of a Nirguṇapanthi's sayings we see what a bhakta tells about that mode:

"All of us are wives of the one Lord, and adore us for him."

This bridal piety is more normal in women saints. They can easily surrender their all at the feet of their Lord Paraśiva as His spouses. Āṇḍaḷ, Mīrā, Kanhopatra, and, among the

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1. Radha Kamal Mukherjee, *Theory and Art of Mysticism*
2. ibid.
3. ibid.

Western saints, St. Teresa and Julian of Norwich—in all these we notice such a mode of bhakti. Among such women saints of the world, Akka Mahādēvi occupies a place of honour.

For Mīrā, Giridhara Gōpāla is the breath of her being. He alone is her real Lord. Saying, "mere to Giridhara Gōpāla na koyi", or "Giridhara Gōpāla is mine but none else," she had surrendered herself to Him. For Āṇḍaḷ or Raṅganāyaki, Śrī Raṅga Himself is the Lord of her heart, Master of her beauty. She would wear, herself, the garland she wore for Him and see her beauty in the mirror. What she said then runs thus :

"Am I fair enough to enkindle his love ? Would the charmer of my heart like my beauty ?"[1]

To surrender her handsome body at His feet was Raṅganāyaki's yearning. She seeks the aid of the God of Love (Manmatha) to persuade Raṅga to accept her. Here are her words :

"I pray thee, Manmatha, let thy arrows of flower hasten me to my beloved. Let them plunge me into the splendour of Krishna. Destine me, O God of Love, for the sweet embrace of Ranga. I have consecrated by swelling breast into Him alone."[2] Being pleased with her love, Viṣṇu Himself appears in a dream to the priests and worshippers and makes them marry her to Him. We read that they were married to each other. She, believing in His personal form, longed to be His wife in the world's way ; here we witness her bridal piety.

Akka Mahādēvi's bridal piety is of a different mode. Her Śiva is not prepared to love her for physical beauty or for a garland she might wear. Therefore she asks :

> "What if the body darkens black as black ?
> What if the body flashes light as light ?"

and annihilates all bodily infatuation. For her marriage with her Lord Cennamallikārjuna she does not seek Manmatha's aid. She only longs for the divine experience of the Śaraṇas, who have had God as their wedded Lord. She goes all the long way

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1. Swami Siddhananda Bharati, *Ālvār Saints*
2. ibid.

up to the city of Kalyāṇa in quest thereof. Through their fellowship she fulfils her desire :

"O Lord, by fellowship with those
Who have experienced Thee,
My body has been purified ;
O Lord, because those ones
Who have experienced Thee
Have rubbed and cut and rubbed me hard
To make me fit for Thee,
My mind is purified ;
Because I have received
All senses as Thy Śaraṇas' grace,
My entire body has been purified.
O Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord,
Because Thy Śaraṇas have made me such,
I am an ornament to Thy Śaraṇas,
O Prabhu !"

Thus she, living the mystic way in the midst of mystics, attains to her Lord's feet. True to the Śaraṇas' mystic way, she finds her Lord in herself :

"O Lord, I pined for Thee
With parched mouth, thinking that
I was away from Thee !
O Lord, if Thou come near
And take thy seat upon my palm,
Henceforward all that love
Shall be in Thee, O Liṅga Lord !
The pupils of my eyes, behold !
Are set on Thee !
O Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord,
Gazing at Thee continuously
Upon my palm, my eyes have been
Transformed into my soul !"

Thus she finds her lord in her Iṣṭaliṅga itself. As she evolves, she, her Lord's spouce, ultimately becomes the Lord Himself. She attains consubstantial union with him ; "When my consciousness is become one with Thee, whom would I know ?

Becoming Thee in Thyself I forgot Thee through Thee." Her constant pursuit and the Śaraṇas' fellowship lead her to this height.

The Śaraṇas believed that the seeker's path must, through mutual discussion and exchange of views, gradually go on evolving. They were not such as to assume that Śiva would, appearing one day in dream, save them. One must redeem oneself and find the means and occasions for it. They gave greater importance to the fellowship of the Śaraṇas, who followed the same path. Many a time, we notice, the word 'anubhāva' is used in the sense of discussion with mystics :

"Look ye all,
The divine experience is the seed of Bhakti,
The divine experience is the practice of Bhakti.
Bhakti without divine experience wearies him.
If you hear not with modesty
When you have divine experience,
Would Kūḍala Cennasaṅga fail
To cast you into a terrific hell ?"

"Save yourselves, O Sirs,
Listening to Śiva's, Guru's and
The Pioneers' words !
If you do, you will be self-fulfilled,
Body and mind having melted,
With affection set on the Śaraṇas ;
If you listen to the divine experience,
That itself is mukti.
But if the mind is set upon
Songs that disturb the mind
How can initiation take place,
O Mahāliṅga Kallēśvara ?"

"Devotion severed from Experience
Escapes our reach ; Liṅga, unrealised
In Experience, escapes the joy
Of consubstantial union ;
Prasāda without Experience confers
No peace ; ay, nothing can be known

Without Experience. So could you say,
'What need has one of Śiva-śaraṇas
If one has lodgement in oneself?'
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord, could it be said
That your Experience is no more
Than word clashing with word,
O Prabhu?"

Thus, in all such vacanas, the Śaraṇas, it may be noticed, have used the word 'anubhāva' in a very special sense. They mean by the word 'consubstantial union of aṅga and Liṅga.' This is the seed of their bhakti and the foundation-stone of their quest. It means in brief that Bhakti in the Śaraṇa way is the path that the seeker who, through exchange of thoughts and experiences with the divine experients, has seen the ultimate shape of life and gained the power to discriminate between the eternal and the temporal, undertakes to follow. That is why it has grown along the philosophical lines that can appeal to the rational minds of our day.

The Śaraṇas, having tested all sciences and scriptures, traditions and customs, on the touchstone of their Experience, accepted the grain and cast away the chaff. No word or doctrine can be acceptable only because it was so in the past. Let it be found in the Vēdas and Upanishads or Purāṇas and Āgamas, it has a value only if it lends strength to our life. They weighed everything with such a critical and independent bent of mind. They assimilated what was good. They tried boldly to remove the rubbish that had accumulated in the name of religion. Therefore, their way, many a time, struck as revolutionary to the society of their day.

They courageously encountered all doubts and problems that arose in their way, and with robust independence of mind, freely discussed them. The Religio-mystic Academy in Basavēśvara's Great House was the centre of divine discourses and mystical discussions, where all doubts were discussed without fear or mental reservation.

Hundreds of subjects — from caste distinctions that have divided society into high and low, to the necessity of Iṣṭaliṅga, consubstantial union of Liṅga and aṅga, and the doctrine that

work is worship, were taken up for discussion. From Prime Minister Basavēśvara to Haraḷayya,—an untouchable—all had equal status and equal opportunity to participate in the proceedings. Thus, all such discussions, and exchanges of thoughts and experiences perfected the way of Śaraṇa mysticism. It is not a useless list of likes and dislikes arising in the mind of any individual. It is a live source of strength that hundreds of brilliant souls, through their constant efforts and discipline, lived, practised, attained and demonstrated the ideal of divine experience.

CHAPTER IV

THE ŚARAṆA LITERATURE

Literature and Mysticism

For all spheres of human activity the world itself provides a creative source of incentive and inspiration. This multifoliate universe is inscrutable, unfathomable and full of baffling variety, and hence arouses an irrepressible inquisitiveness in the thinking mind of man to pry into its mysteries, and posits hundreds of problems before him. To face them boldly and find out tangible answers for them has been a constant endeavour of man's existence here. Philosophy or physical science, literature or religion — all, it may be said, are diverse facets of the same endeavour.

Science and philosophy, essentially based on the intellect, launch their quest after truth along the path of logical investigation. More specially, physical science assumes that the ultimate aim of its inquiry and research is limited to the external world only, and probes into its secrets and tries to discover the laws and principles that govern its functioning; whereas philosophy attempts to know and discover, by means of speculative reasoning, the nature of the power that, lurking behind the universe, functions as an operative cause of its visible form and of the laws that regulate its eventual course and order.

It is here that literature divorces itself from philosophy. The truth is that the scientist and the philosopher strive to know through research and analysis and the poet attempts to experienc and express through synthesis and intuition. That is, literaturee is intuitive and pertains to the higher perceptions of the heart. Every object and every incident of the world stirs up ripples in the poet's heart, strikes the chord of emotion. When such a vibration of emotion, not limited to this world nor felt in respect of worldly problems, experiences and curiosities, leans towards an unearthly power which is the basic source of all

these problems, literature, in the larger sense of the term, turns out to be religion.

What philosophy discusses with intellectual inquisitiveness, religion endeavours to know through living and intuitional action and to have a direct vision of the truth. This is the ultimate goal of the spiritual path. The direct vision and real experience of that truth is known as "anubhāva", or mystic experience.

If literature attempts to couch in words mainly the impulses and perceptions drawn from the external view of the world, mysticism aims at a living experience of the inner power that lies behind all this. The aim of literature is observation of life and its expression, whereas that of a mystic is to stand steadfast in the flux of life, to find out the life that transcends it and bring its light to the life in the world. As Mr. S. S. Malwad puts it, "If a poet weds heart to heart, a mystic experiences the consubstantial union of the Self and the Divine; the one, standing on earth, stretches his hands to Heaven, whereas the other, though in the Heaven, is prepared to lift up the earth."[1] In that attempt, the light of Divine consciousness manifests in the language of the mortal world and finds literary expression. This mystic literature, being a link that unites the mortal and the immortal world, stands out as a finger-post that directs earth to Heaven.

But the two, in a sense, are exclusively different and mutually independent in their aims and objects, and also in their ways and means. Though this might be true when we look at literature purely from the literary point of view, yet, as a matter of fact, it attains its fulfilment only when it rises to mystic heights. T. S. Eliot expresses the same opinion in a slightly different way:

"The greatness of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether that is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards."[2] He means that it is not enough for literature to be

1. Malwad, S. S., *Sāhitya Samālocane.*
2. Eliot, T. S., *Essays: Ancient and Modern.*

good, if it remains literature pure and simple. It must suggest a vision of life that transcends it.

Our people have for the same reason called poets seers; 'nānṛṣiḥ kurute kāvyam' — they said. The same view is endorsed by Sri Aurobindo Ghose: "The greatest poetry gives expression to the realisation of the Divine in the world and man." Codifying his views on poetry he defines it as —

"Rhythmic speech which rises at once from the heart of the seer and from the distant home of truth."

Thus literature would accomplish its ideal only when, animated by mystic inspiration, it culminates in a living experience of the Divine. But the path that a poet follows for this end is his own; it is a literary path. Unlike that of a scientist and/or a philosopher, it is not a way of analysis and inquiry. It is building up of a new world altogether in a fine frenzy of aesthetic and ecstatic experience.

A literateur, through his observation of the external phenomena of nature and of various incidents of life, gathers several impressions and experiences which are usually beyond the apprehension of a common man, and communicates them through the medium of language, presents them on the basis of some specific illustrations. The poet's expression corresponds to his experience. When his experience is limited to the physical aspects of nature, or restricts itself to the outward events of life, it comes out as a description of life. When he sets out on the quest of abiding truth underlying the external incidents of life in a spirit of adventure:

> "It's not a worldly tale that imitates
> Outward phenomena, but the most true
> Records that mirror truths eternal and divine,"

it becomes a true criticism of life, an ideal vision of life.[1]

At the sight of beauty, the heart of a literateur vibrates and is moved by the various events and incidents of life; and, having identified itself with them, expresses its experience. This experience itself is known as intuitive experience, and the expression as literature. The unique 'faculty of experiencing it

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1. Kuvempu, *SriRāmāyana Darśanam.*

by identifying oneself with it' is common to the mystic and the literateur. But what is it? On the answer to this question will depend whether it is intuitive or mystic experience. The eternal beauty that stands behind this external beauty, the light of perennial consciousness that abides beyond the life in the world—to see it everywhere and strike the strings of one's heart in tune with its vibration is, in the true sense of the term, mystic experience. The song of the soul that springs on that blessed height will become mystic literature. The Śaraṇas' vacana literature is, in this sense, mystic literature.

In a sense, mystic literature may mean a collection of all the books written about mysticism: as we speak of scientific literature, political literature, religious literature, etc. But when we, without taking the term 'literature' in so wide and extensive a sense, consider it in the sense of writing that springs from the heart and touches the heart, it becomes pure literature; when this emotional intuition, tending upward and realising through its own genius the eternal and transcendental Truth, recreates it in words, it becomes 'dārśanika sāhitya', or revealed literature. When the poet embodies that revelation, which is manifest in his literature, in his life too, he becomes a great man. This is the way of attaining to the Divine Experience through literature itself.

Some seekers follow the path of mysticism through certain religious exercises. In accordance with their religious background, the exercises they undertake may vary, to a considerable extent, in form and method, but the ultimate bliss that they all experience is one and the same. It is ineffable; it transcends the reach of thought and words. As Nārada Bhakti Sūtra puts it, "mukhaṁ svadanavat", or it is as a dumb man tasting sweetness. But, nonetheless, the mystic proposes to communicate his experience for the good of the world. The suffering he has undergone to see that Light, the path he has trodden, and, finally, the bliss he has experienced—all these he gives voice to in the language of the mortal world. The language takes shape as an inevitable medium of those experiences.

We see such an attitude of mind in the vacanas uttered by the Śiva Śaraṇas. Literary composition was not their main aim.

To attain to the highest goal of life was their actual ideal. The immense venture of its attainment and the joyous song of fulfilment that they sang from the height found expression in the form of vacanas. As the darkness of our house is dispelled by the dawn of the sun that illumines the whole world, the birth of this mystic sun enriched Kannada literature and raised it to the height of universal literature. Hudson's definition of literature, "Literature is fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language,"[1] applies to the Śaraṇa literature as well. The Śaraṇas saw life and saw it whole with the perfect eye. They looked at life from all planes—beginning with the common struggle on the material plane to the plane of bliss. They condemning nothing, realised unity in diversity and harmony in variety. It is a unique venture of theirs, to achieve the 'hereafter' without rejecting the 'here'. We have seen already how their pursuits and achievements are expressed in their vacanas. We may consider a few more vacanas here from the literary point of view.

When literature gives room to 'philosophy', 'religion' and 'the goal of life,' it bends under the load of thought and loses most of its basic and essentially literary characteristics—that is one view and it is not without truth. The main characteristic of literature is not an arbitrary disposition of logic and reason. To provide joy is its main aim. Here we must understand the scope of the word joy. What is known as joy is not an easy means of giving momentary pleasure to the mind. Even the food we eat can, in a way, do it. The joy derived from literature must become a living power that expands the mind, animates the heart and illumines the personality. The word ānanda in the phrase, 'kavyamānandāya' carries this meaning. The complete vision of life can be had in literature only in the form of joy. Only when it embodies that does literature attain fulfilment. The Śaraṇa Literature has attained such a fulfilment.

This power the Śaraṇas seem to have acquired from their wide experience of life. They saw life with open eyes and faced it fearlessly. At the sight of superstition and ignorance, of the misery and grief of their fellow-beings, their heart was moved

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1. Hudson, W. H. *Introduction to the Study of Literature.*

to pity, as well as stirred to righteous indignation against the society that was responsible for it. They had, surmounting, through their discipline, the Himalayan heights of problems, realised the ultimate truth. The soaring genius of their hearts, which had enriched itself through all such discipline, observation and experience, has found utterance in the form of vacanas. In them, as Allama Prabhu has put it, 'their very word has become theeffulgent light.'

Though it is true that all the words of all the Vacanakāras do not reach the same height of genius, yet this is the perennial source of their inspiration and the ideal set before them. All the Śaraṇas tried their utmost to scale it. A few of them, at least, are the supreme souls that have transcended even this summit. The height of each Śaraṇa has found expression in his vacanas.

A literateur describes the form of a thing, whereas a mystic reflects on its core and content. If the one attempts to give form to his feelings, the other, following the same and being strengthened by them, soars higher still. We witness this power in the Śaraṇas. Observing the events of the world, their heart too is moved and stirred like that of any other poet or literateur. But it does not stop there, but has become a springboard for further pursuit—a source of inspiration.

When a thinking man looks at world with his eyes wide open, the thought that occurs first to his mind is: "What is the relation between me and the world? What is the purpose of human life and how does it end? What is the power that disintegrates all his dreams of happiness?. What is the cause of his misery? When and how is its end?"—hundreds of such questions face him. The Śaraṇas have devoted their thought and attention to all these, and discussed them. But not in the form of a philosophical system that aims at logical investigation. There are vacanas available of that type too. But the Śaraṇas have, oftener than not, shed a new light on these thoughts from the ardour of a poet's heart.

The various facets of the seeker's mind, the doubts and riddles he has to face; the ethical and spiritual disciplines he has to practise scrupulously—all these have found a living expression right from the inner experience of the Śaranas. Many

of the Śaraṇas have the power of felicitous expression even in contexts that might have normally been too reflective, hence dull and prosaic. The vacanas can bear the weight of the subtle discussion of themes like the Creation, the Creator and the nature of liberation with charming and effortless ease and exhibit poetic grace besides (Vacanas quoted in the Chapter on 'The Śaraṇa Philosophy and Discipline' may be referred to). The Kannada language got from the Śaraṇas a unique and dynamic power that can carry in plain and simple words the load of high philosophical and mystical thoughts, without sacrificing literary grace. It is their precious gift to the Kannada language and literature.

The truth of this is more clearly realised when they describe the ultimate height of their experience. Their adventurous pilgrimage along the path of spiritual discipline has led them to an unprecedented realm of perfection. They have scaled the loftiest height that man might ascend and actually seen face to face "the Light that transcends both word and thought." They have themselves become It. Standing on thath eight, they had a masterful gift of capturing its ineffable experience in words, as can be noticed in their vacanas.

As for Prabhu, he is a master without a parallel in this respect. He is one who has seen the highest horizon of Advaita by the sustained power of his amazing austerity, and can give voice to it in a style equally luminous and powerful. He is a daring genius, able "to charge a mustardseed with an ocean of meaning."

We have seen the vacanas already quoted in respect of the the perfect identity of Śiva and Jīva, beginning with :

"I have become
As fire within the tree
That burns the tree ;
Even as the scent
Of the wide-wandering wind
Kissing my nose ;
Even as a soldered doll
Catching fire !

At Gūhēśvara's feet
My wheel of births has ceased!"

"Say, if a heap of camphor burn,
Where is the charcoal to be found?
And will a shrine of mist support
A sunlight pinnacle?
When you have shot a waxen dart
Into a pile of burning coal,
Do you expect to find it again?
O Siddharāmayya,
When you have known Guhēśvaraliṅga,
Would you still seek for him as God?"

"When in the flowery bower
Of mine own secure home,
The splendour of the Light—
Immaculate, eterne—
And the Śivayōgi experience
Were even as one,
Your Śaraṇa, O Guhēśvara,
Was in incomparable bliss!"

and the grandeur of his cosmic worship. We may also see, along with them, a few more vacanas of his which describe his ultimate height :

"As I stepped back and looked
To see Thy light,
It seemed a hundred million suns
Came into sight;
A cluster of creeping lightnings I
With wonder saw.
O Guhēśvara, if Thou become
The effulgent Liṅga, there be none
Thy glory to match!"

All that the mystic, who has seen the Light beyond compare, does now turns into regular worship. All that he meditates upon becomes the Supreme that transcends the meditating mind ;

"Would be pluck flowers,
He finds none there;
Would he get water,
It cannot be got;
If he would worship,
It does not occur.
What is this wonder, O Lord?
He hasn't forgotten having known,
And has transcended all wonderment:
Awareness of Guhēśvara is such."

This is the height of one who has seen Guhēśvara. He has no need of externals—bath, light and incense.

"If I would pour for bath,
Unsullied and pure-bodied are you.
If I would worship you,
Yours is the worship
With ethereal flowers.
If I would offer food,
Ever content are you.
If I'd wave light and incense
Self-luminous are you.
If I would worship with my hands
You're the Supreme beyond all touch.
When I'd observe my daily vows
You have names infinite,
O Guhēśvara!"

What is needed to know Him who has infinite names, infinite forms and infinite power, is infinite love, which knows no external pomp and show. Note how he has beautifully put it:

"For union of love
What need of a bed?
In a frenzy of passion
Could there be modesty?
In the Śaraṇa who knows Thee
Why this ado of longing to worship?
For gold that is refined

What need of touchstone?
Is there a symbol
For Guhēśvaraliṅga at all?"

Guhēśvara is, transcending symbol, accessible to Knowledge only. When the seeker soars still higher, he has only to merge in Being:

"When mind itself has become Liṅga,
Whom to remember then?
When will itself has merged in Him,
Whom can one crave for then?
When error is dispelled and truth attained,
Whom to know then, O Guhēśvara?"

Each such vacana of Prabhu's carries an abundant wealth of meaning, and as we read them we realise the truth of Aurobindo's remark on poetry:

"Poetry translates the truth of the higher plane of consciousness in the language of the lower one."

If you ask me to invoke
What shall I do?
My body itself has become Kailāsa,
Mind, the Liṅga, body, His repository.
Is there God to invoke? A bhakta to see?
Guhēśvaraliṅga has become the goal".

"In reality beyond conceit,
Beyond Self-consciousness,
O Lord!
I have been:
If I would see, I do not see.
If I would hear, I cannot hear.

What shall I say,
O Guhēśvara?
The great white Light
Is everywhere!"

"The void sowing the void itself,
The void growing the void itself,
The void has vanished into the Void;

Void is life, void the will,
The void of voids have I become,
O Guhēśvara !"

Such words, describing the ultimate height that a Jīva might reach may be said to be a gift that Prabhu has given to world literature.

All the Śaraṇas who had accomplished perfection in their pursuit, had scaled the same height. In the words where they have given expression to that experience we hear the echo of one and the same truth. Dēvara Dāsimayya says :

"As when you put a wisp of hay
Upon a burning gleed,
The latter consumes the first,
So, when you put the seeker's body, the hay,
Upon the Guru's feet,
His body entire is Liṅga :
Mark you, O Rāmanātha !"

Thus the seeker now becomes what he has himself worshipped so far. In another vacana of his, Dēvara Dāsimayya has expressed the same truth :

"The Void that you can
Neither speak of nor see ;
Neither talk to, nor catch :
How can the grossness of this world
Know, O Rāmanātha,
The secret of Its being hid
In this bodiless Void ?"

Like Prabhu saying, "The Void sowing the void itself," Dāsimayya repeats that all this seeming universe vanishes into the perfect Void of voids.

Ṣaṇmukhaswāmi seems to echo, below, almost the very words of Dāsimayya—"Like putting hay upon a burning gleed" :

"The holy Guru's word made me
Like metal alchemised ;
Like camphor that's consumed by fire ;
Like hay by fire consumed."

Even so, the following vacana of his on the consubstantial union of Liṅga and aṅga may be also noticed;

"Look, the consubstantially united
Has neither attributes nor is without them;
Is neither Form nor Formlessness;
Is neither void nor yet non-void;
Is neither desiring nor non-desiring;
Is neither dvaita nor advaita;
All appearance that appears thus
Becoming Himself,
Shedding both the here and hereafter,
Being the Absolute Godhead,
Hiding his own symbol and
Becoming the Void of voids —
What can I compare with, O Akhaṇḍēśvara?"

We have already noted Basavēśvara's words on the sublimity of the consubstantial union of Liṅga and aṅga. We may remember here how the fruit of his life, grown on the soil of bhakti, was dedicated to Kūḍala Saṅga, or how he, annihilating the triple modes, sang of his own Self, or how he sank into Silence as light in the Great Light:

"After the eyes are filled, there's nought to see,
After the ears are filled, there's nought to hear,
After the hands are filled, there's nought to adore,
After the heart is filled, there's nought to think
Of our great Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama!"

Mr. S. S. Malwad's interpretation of this vacana is very significant. Seeing, hearing and worshipping—considering these, respectively, as a physical experience of a common man, an intuitive experience of a poet and a divine experience of a mystic, he has pointed out the nature of a mystic:

"In the physical experience reactions upon the external things take place. In poetic experience they provide the emotional content. In divine experience, when the touch of the Divine was felt all around, there was no scope left for external reactions or for emotional enrichment. Eyes, ears, body, mind—

all are filled full in that Experience. This experience of filling in is the secret of Śivānubhava, or Divine experience. He who, leaving the jealousies and passions behind and marching beyond the flow of ecstasy, effulges in the Divine light of consubstantial union, is alone a mystic."[1]

The same may be corroborated by quoting another vacana of Basavanna :

"He who can give form to the void
Is a Śaraṇa ;
He who can turn that form into the void
Is Liṅga-experient.
If he can't give a form to the void,
How's he a Śaraṇa ?
If he can't turn that form into the void,
How's he a Liṅga-experient ?
If these two can be made in one,
Can there be room in Thee? O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,"

Śaraṇa is one who can witness to the Śiva Principle, which is all-pervasive and absolute void, in the diverse shapes and forms of the world. He is a mystic who knows that the immaculate principle that lies behind the tantalizing variety of form, is essentially the Formless. As a matter of fact, the two are not different, asserts Basavanna, and 'must become one.' The mystic must experience the living presence of God everywhere and in everything, and attain, through all these forms, to the Void. What Basavanna stresses here is that to unite the two — this form and that void—integrally is the true path of a mystic.

The Śaraṇas can express even such deep thoughts in their vacanas in plain and simple words, which are yet able to carry the content of their vision of life. It is no wonder if the mind's anguish, the heart's longing, the pangs of divine love and such other feelings and impulses find poetic utterance.

Even high philosophy, which usually takes the form of an ethical sermon, a metaphysical concept, or an appetite for knowledge, has been embodied in Śaraṇa literature as poetic expression, as literary form.

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1. Malwad, S. S., *Sāhitya Samālōcane*.

The Śaraṇas are seers of truth as well as poets who worship beauty. But the beauty they have seen is the beauty of consubstantial union of aṅga and Liṅga which is beyond the bournes of poetry. Animated by It have they sung. In the literature of the Śaraṇas, therefore, there runs an abiding union of mysticism and literary excellence.

Vacana Literature: Its Form and Content

The literary form that goes by the name of vacana is a contribution that the Śaraṇas have made to Kannada literature. Both in form and in content, they have added to the value of the contribution made by Kannada literature to the literature of the world.

The Śaraṇas' many-sided revolution of thought, covering as it did every sphere of human life and pouring new life into it, struck a new note in Kannada literature as well. The Kannada language evolved into a fit medium to bear the weight of the Saranas' thought. Basavanna and other Śaraṇas, instead of seeking the aid of Sanskrit to give expression to their high sentiments and deep thoughts, relied only upon Kannada and gave it a new vigour. The very trend of Kannada literature was changed. Fortune came to its gates unsought as it were.

The form and content of Kannada literature till then is not unfamiliar to students of its history. Pampa, the first poet, composing epics which excel all kāvyas written before him, lent immense strength to Kannada literature. One of his works is a Purāna of a Jain Tirthaṅkara, and the other, a popular work, *Bharatā*, wherein he has praised his patron king by comparing his valour with the hero of the epic. Both are champu kāvyas, written in the language of the learned. Subsequent literature followed this path laid down by Pampa. Ranna and a few others, setting Pampa's ideal before them, strove to attain it as much as they could. But in the hands of the lesser poets, who were not as powerful as Pampa and Ranna, the champu style became a mere load of pedantry and, hence, dry, dull and insipid; without new experiments to lend variety, it was, as it were, like a stagnant pool of water. Just then came an onrush of the Śaraṇas' spiritual revolution, a great flood.

The Śaraṇas wanted to give expression to their spiritual ideals and experiences, to the manners and morals, defects and drawbacks of society, in the language easily intelligible to all. They were anxious to propagate their views and ideas among the people in an effective way, for which the difficult champu style, meant for the delight of the learned, was not suitable or helpful. Therefore, they had to fashion a new style altogether for realising their objective of social good. The words they spoke in that endeavour became vacanas.

The term 'Vacana' had been in vogue in the sense of prose, or a piece of it, since long before. Any prose portion, often met with in the Campu Kāvyas, is usually termed 'Vacana'. But there is a great difference between the heavily Sanskrit-loaded, often laboured, diction of those prose bits and the spontaneous, easy, almost effortlessly glowing, diction of the Śaraṇas' vacanas. Very often, the former is an arena of intellectual feats, whereas the latter is the breath of people's redemption.

The Śaraṇas never wrote vacanas deliberately and with the aim of composing literature. They broadcast their ideas as they sprang from their enlightened hearts for the awakening of the people. Every feeling or thought that stimulated their minds, stirred their intellect, and blossomed in their souls, they gave voice to in an expression that befits it. On the strength of such vacanas, born of spontaneous inspiration, the glory and the greatness of vacana literature has soared high. Some of the vacanas are superb. They are self-contained and explain themselves.

All vacanas, except those which expound metaphysics or are lengthy descriptions, are generally brief. They deal with a simple idea, thought or feeling, felt at each time. In this sense we can find the characteristics of the modern lyric in such vacanas. But they are not regular poems; they are prose pieces. However, this prose style is not that of the prose that we find in the Campu Kāvyas of the time, nor is it a dull use of colloquial words and expressions. They may be regarded as unique types of prose-lyrics, possessing the lyrical grace of poetry and the rhythmic articulation of prose.

In them there are no strict rules, of metre and rhyme,

alliteration, foot, rhythm, syllable, and accent that we usually find in regular poetry. Nonetheless, we notice in them a peculiar rhythm that suits the thought content. For instance :

"The Cakōra waits, intent,
The moonlight's silver dawn ;
The 'lotus' heart is bent
Upon the splendid morn ;
The bee's, on the flower's scent !
Even thus, for Thee, even thus
My heart is tremulous,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord."

There is no rule that there should be metre and rhyming of this kind in all vacanas. This is but a peculiar example. Even so,

"I do not seek the height
Without the lowly state :
Can you get milk
Unless you do
The meanest tasks ?
I cannot roll in hell, being high.
O Kūḍala Saṅgama,
Place me beneath
Thy Śaraṇas' feet,
Most bountiful Lord !"

"Look, Liṅga, grant me the joy
Of seeing the Jaṅgama's face
As he worships the Liṅga !
Come, give me the supreme bliss :
I beg of Thee this only gift,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

"Can there be piety
In words and more words ?
Can there be piety
Unless your body is spent,
Unless your wealth is spent ?
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Plays tricks with you
Until your bones look out :

Can there be piety
Unless you stand his fun?"

"Soil is Thy gift,
Thy gift the standing crop,
The wind that moves
And blows is Thy gift.
What shall I say
Of the curs, O Rāmānātha,
That, living on Thy gift,
Yet praise others?"

"Hark, ye witless fools,
That claim to have shed births.
Are they not mundane
Your body's and mind's straits?
The traits of your breath?
All these, clinging to
Earthly things, became
A burden to life.
Worshipping the mundane
I became free from births,
O Guhēśvara!"

"What is penance, and
What is wishing ill of others?
What is counting of beads
What is telling a lie
Against Śaraṇas?
What is fivefold holy practice,
What is leaning to sin?
I fear them who thus
Revel in outward show
And worldly pomp,
And away you run in dread of them
O Nijaguṇa Svatantra Siddhaliṅga."

In these, we find no particular rule or convention adhered to. Each seems to follow its own rule, matching its content, context and peculiarity and to take its own shape. Some

structure, which cannot be defined by any specific rule, seems to mark off the vacana prose from regular prose in general and has made them into "prose-lyrics."

As we notice the form of vacanas, one element that strikes our eye at once is the seal of the Śaraṇa's dedication at the close of each vacana. Generally, every Śaraṇa is found to have a devotion to his chosen deity: Kūḍala Saṅgamadēva, Guhēśvara, Cenna Mallikārjuna, Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna — so on and so forth. In some cases, the Guru's name is taken as dedication. For instance, Muktāyakka, in her vacanas, invokes the name of Ajaganna, her brother as well as Guru. Very few, like Aṁbigara Cauḍayya and Uriliṅgapeddi, have used their own names. All close their vacana with a dedication in a suitable form. From the dedication itself we can make out each vacanakāra[1].

The next element that strikes us is the Sanskrit verses that the vacanakaras occasionally quote. They quote from the Vedas, Upanishads, Āgamas and Purāṇas, etc. When they discuss the metaphysical aspects of their religion and expound thoughts and practices, we come across such quotations.

"What shall I say, O Lord,
Of one who stands ten fingers above
The highest of the holy books —
A glory greater than the great,
Inscrutable to the intellect?
O greater than the great,
And subtler than the subtlest, Thou
Most bountiful Lord
Kūḍala Saṅgama!"

"O God, after adoring Thee,
The caste of Cenna changed to good!
O God, after adoring Thee,

1. In several cases, though the dedications are known, yet the names of the Śaraṇas bearing the respective dedication are not. For instance: the Śaraṇa with the dedication, "Nijaguru Svatantra Siddhaliṅgēśvara" has composed very good vacanas; but who he was is not known at all.

The caste of Dasa has spread
All over the land.
O God, when Maḍivāḷa Mācayya had
Bowed low to Thee,
He rose to be Thy Śaraṇa!
What boundary is there, O Lord,
Unto the caste Thou lovest,
The filth Thou lovest not?
He who is dedicate
To Liṅga-worship, though he be
An outcaste, is an excellent sage;
Whereas a Brahmin void of it
I but an outcast— this being so,
What means this high and lower caste?
It's he who does not say
'I salute Thee, O Unborn'
That is the low-born man!"

Thus Basavanna has also quoted from Sanskrit. However, in Basava, Allama and Mahādēviyakka we find very few such quotations. In others, like Cennabasavanna, who have given greater prominence to the exposition of their philosophy, we find slightly more quotations. Notwithstanding, the Śaraṇas have not given importance to quotations; for they tested all scriptural authorities on the touchstone of their own life-experience and sang only of that which passed that test. Hence they trusted the authority of experience alone and gave it direct expression.

The content of the vacanas mirrors the mind of the vacanakāras. Their hearts yearning for the Divine, prayer, different modes of bhakti, their universal compassion to reveal to all the nature of the truth that they have realised—all these facets of the mind we witness in the form of vacanas. The vacanas bearing such content have come out as fine literary pieces. Only in such vacanas is the heart of the Śaraṇas, animated by lyrical rapture, revealed. The light that illumines the shrine of their heart effulges in them as it were. The rest are out of consideration here.

The Śaraṇas did not write to gain, through their writings, public applause. As Basavanna puts it,

> "If you should speak, great God must say
> 'Ay ay, that's very true' ".

They dedicated their power of speech to the delight of the Divine and revealed His glory in their words. That is why their vision of life has manifested itself completely in their vacanas.

Many-sided is the life of the Śaraṇas. Some of them are at once seekers, social workers, torch-bearers of truth and revolutionaries. Nonetheless, they were men of action humbly doing their work as a divine duty of their daily life. They observed life with eyes open and without any bias. They were moved by the sorry spectacle of misery and squalor in the world, had themselves experienced pleasure and pain in life and welcomed scorn and praise with a quiet spirit. As a result, their spirit was enriched by hundreds of experiences of various kinds and soared high to the sky. We see the stamp of all this in their vacanas.

The power of communicating their wide experience direct to the heart of the readers they possessed in a remarkable degree. It was a rare accomplishment of theirs. The figures and the images, the similes and metaphors they have used, the illustrations and examples they have given, and the aphoristic utterances they have lent voice to—are all a living witness to their vast experience and loving human compassion.

The Śaraṇas have not used figures of speech with a desire to make their vacanas literary pieces. The figures have voluntarily occurred to them as indispensable means for the expression of their experience. In fact, in all good literature such figures occur in the same manner. Any work of literature that is written deliberately to make use of a particular figure of speech sounds artificial or unnatural. In a real poem, where the poet's experience finds voice, the figures of speech that are indispensable occur of their own accord. They may appear to be figures to the readers, but for the poet they are spontaneous utterances. The figures must come with spontaneous and effortless ease and grace. This is perfectly true in respect of the vacanas.

Let alone the figures of thought, like simile, etc. Even the figures of speech appear natural and elegant. In certain vacanas we notice a rhythm and a cadence all their own. Figures of speech like epanaphora, alliteration, and pun have become the very substance of a vacana :

"With none to see me,
I'm withered, Sir ;
With none to speak to me,
I've waned ;
With none to ask
For all I am and have,
I have grown lean !
Being me
Your teasing, begging Śaraṇas,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
And make them tease and beg of me !"

"Do I say Śāstra is great ?
It only exalts Karma !
Do I say Vēda is great ?
It tells of animal sacrifice !
Do I say Smṛti is great ?
It seeks the present sign !
As He is in none of these,
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama can be seen
Nowhere except
In triple dedication."

"If it's Thy will, O Lord,
A log may sprout !
If it's Thy will, O Lord,
A barren cow gives milk !
If it's Thy will, O Lord,
Poison is turned to nectar !
If it's Thy will, O Lord,
All things obey one's call,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

By the use of synonyms like 'withered' 'waned' 'Do I say... is great ?' and the repetition of a clause like 'If it's Thy will'

and the use of final rhyming, etc. what a marvellous impression these vacanas of Basavanna carry, needs not to be explained. Several vacanas of this type may be found in Basavanna as well as others :

"What is devotion ? It is
As Dāsayya did practise it.
What is devotion ? It is
As Siriyāḷa practised it.
What is devotion ? It is
As our Sindhu-Ballāḷa
Did practise it.
What is devotion, Lord
Kūḍala Saṅgama ? It is as you
Kept guard at Bāṇa's door !"

"I call upon Thee, but Thou know'st me not !
I drudge for Thee : Thou see'st me not...
How can I live, Lord, how survive ?
Thou only, Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
Art to me life, art ground and goal !"

"Say I'm a hero : what need then
To play with a stick ?
Say I'm a servant : what need then
To cling to life ?
Say I'm a bhakta : what need then
To cling to body, mind and wealth ?
Should I but question
Both your command and threats,
It is my servanthood that takes a blow,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

"I am a sceptic, Lord, most ignorant
Of any thing ; a hypocrite
Devoid of faith ; a drudge
Of Śaraṇas who believe in Thee,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

"Let me be an ox
To the Śaraṇa,

Let me be a slave
To the Śaraṇa,
Let me be a dog
That guards the gates
Of the devotees' houses
Like a watchman.
Let me be the fence
Of the backyard,
O Rāmanātha the Maker,
Of the devotees' homes
Who bow to Thee with folded hands."

"Can a donkey know
The smell of musk?
Can a maid know
The value of the venerable and the Guru?
How can they know Thee,
O Rāmanātha, who know not
Bhakti, the worthless creatures?"

"I call them small men
Who, holding a stone, claim
To see Allama;
If all who hold a stone
Become Allama
Where would be the seed of birth,
O Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna?"

"So long as you know aṅga
You must worship Śivaliṅga.
So long as you have soul's thirst
You must offer to Liṅga
All things that come to you.
This is the seed of Consciousness,
The home of Knowledge,
The secret of the all-pervasive one,
The power that knows
Īṣaṇamūrti Mallikārjunaliṅga."

"Let my heart put its trust in Thee;
Let my heart give its love to Thee;

Let my heart be at one with Thee ;
Let my heart yield itself to Thee ;
Let my heart toil and moil for Thee ;
Let my heart labour for Thy sake ;
Let my heart melt, dissolve in Thee ;
Let my heart pine, repine for Thee ;
Let my five senses sink in Thee
As water in a heated iron,
O Cenna Mallikārjuna Lord !"

Instances could be multiplied. Here we notice the elegance produced by the repetition of the same word, by final and initial rhymes (i.e., in the original) and cadence.

The popular poet, Sarvajna, asks, "Of what avail to sing for hours a song without rhyme or alliteration ?" Kannadigas are fond of rhyme and assonance. This perfectly applies to the Śaraṇas too. The assonance here is not bound to any particular letter of any particular line. Repetition of the same sound produces a welcome effect upon the ears and stirs therethrough the desired emotion. Such alliteration we find in the Śaraṇas' words :

"Siribandittendu hiridāgi higgabēḍa.
Siriyembudu kanasina pariyante nōḍā"

or

"Swell not with too much joy when riches come :
For riches are the fashion of a dream."

"haranīva kālakke siriyu bennalli bakku
haridu heddoreyu keretumbidantayya."

or

"When the Lord gives
Wealth follows you !
It's like the stream
Flooding a tank."

"sancalavillada bhakti, vancaneyillada mahāntara tōrā"

"Show me devotion that does not waver,
A great one free from all deceit,"

"are bhaktarādavara nere bēḍā, hore bēḍā
dāri saṅgabēḍā, dūranuḍisalu bēḍa."

or

"Avoid the neighbourhood,
Avoid the company, of those
Who are pious half and half.
Do not walk far with them ;
Do not talk long to them."

"dūṣakanobba dēśava koṭṭoḍe
āṣemāḍiyavana horeyallirabēḍa."

or

"If a reprobate, a worthless man,
Offers an entire country to you,
Don't stay in his presence out of greed!"

"holeya holabiganādoḍe
ātana horeyallippudu lēsu kaṇḍayya."

or

"Observe, Sir, if a pariah behaves
The right way, it's good to court
His company..."

"advaitava nuḍidu ahaṅkāriyādenayya !
brahmava nuḍidu nānu bhramitanādenayya !
śūnyava nuḍidu nānu sukhaduḥkhakke guriyādenayyā."

or

"In speaking of Advaita I assert myself !
In speaking of Brahma, I beguile myself !
In speaking of the Void, I fall a victim
To joy and grief."

"eḍaraḍasidalli mṛḍa nimma nenevaru
eḍaraḍasida vipattu kaḍeyāgaloḍane
nimmaneḍahiyū kāṇaru."

or

"Under the assault of adversity, O Mṛḍa,
They think of Thee ;
When the danger of that assault has passed,
They fail to see Thee
Even when they trip over Thee."

"takkipa nallana takkipa terananu cadurē
cadurisade enagusirā."

or

"Tell me concisely, O cunning woman,
How to deceive a deceitful husband."

"kaḍege māḍada bhakti, dṛḍhavilladāḷutana
mṛḍanoliya hēḷidare entolivanayya."

or

"Devotion that endures not to the end ;
Service without constancy : if I say
'Love me, O Mṛḍa,' will he love ? "

"ādante āgali, mādante māṇali, enalāgadu
nēmadātaṅge chala bēku, chala bēkayya."

or

"You should not say : let happen what may,
Or not at all.
The votary mut be firm, be firm !"

Thus we notice in the vacana literature hundreds of word' chiming in their own peculiar way.

There are also instances of bringing about a handsome effect by way of slēṣālaṅkāra, using words having double meanings. Basavanna's' famous vacana may be noted here :

"vacanadalli nāmāmṛta tuṁbi,
nayanadalli nimma-mūruti tuṁbi,
manadalli nimma nenahu tuṁbi,
kiviyalli kīruti tuṁbi,
kūḍalasaṅgamadēvā nimma caraṇakamaladalānu tuṁbi."

or

"Lord, I am a bee
In the lotus of Thy feet ;
Lo, my tongue is sweet
With nectar of Thy name ;
My eyes are all aflame
With beauty of Thy face ;
The very thought of Thee
Haunts all my nights and days ;
My ears are filled, you see,
With music of Thy praise !"

Here the word 'tumbi' in the last line differs in meaning from the same word used in other lines. 'Tumbi' in the last line (of the original) means a 'bee', whereas in other lines it means 'filling with'. In another vacana, Basavanna has punned on the word 'bidiru', or bamboo :

"bidiralaṇḍanavakku, bidire sattigeyakku,
bidiralli guḍiyu gūḍāravakku,
bidiralli sakala saṁpadavellavu,
bidiradavara mecca namma kūḍala saṅgamadēva."

or

"The bamboo bends to a palanquin pole,
The bamboo stands for a sunshade stick ;
The bamboo does, too, for a mast
Of flag or tent :
The bamboo can be all your wealth !
Our Kūḍala Saṅgamadēva dislikes
Those who bend not in humbleness !"

In the last line 'bidiru' means to 'bend in humbleness'. Even so in another vacana :

"toreya mīvaṇṇagaḷirā,
toreya mīva svāmigaḷirā,
toreyiṁ bhō, toreyiṁ bhō,
paranāriya saṅgava toreyiṁ bhō !
iva toreyade hōgi toreya mindare
barudore hōhudu kūḍala saṅgamadēva."

or

"O brothers, ye who dip into a stream,
O brothers, ye who dip into a stream,
Renounce, renounce, renounce
Relations with another's wife :
Renounce
The lusting for another's goods !
For if you dip into a stream
Without renouncing these,
'T will be as dipping into a stream
That has run dry,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

He has punned on the word 'tore'. It means a stream as well as to 'give up.' Siddharāma has also played on words with similar pronunciation in the following vacana :

"tiḷi nīrembe, tiḷi nīrembe
tiḷe nīyendu ondudina andillelō mānavā.
kṣaṇakṣaṇakke 'tilinī' endare
taḷuhadē tanna nijava koḍane Kapilasiddha
Mallēndra."

or

"Pure water, pure water you say, O man,
But never once have you said, 'Know thyself.'
Every movement, if you repeat
'Know thyself', does He fail to
Bestow His Self on you —
Kapilasiddha Mallēndra."

Here 'tiḷinīra' means 'pure water' whereas 'till ni' means 'know thyself'. He suggests, instead of asking for 'pure water,' one should better 'know oneself.'

Prabhu's vacana may be noted here :

"kalyāṇavanariye kaṭakavanariye, bēṇṭeyanāḍutidde :
enna kai nōḍi bhō kalivīra subhaṭaru.
enna kai nōḍi bhō aruhiriyaru.
kāḍi gelidu Guhēśvara Liṅgadallige —
talevarigeya-nikki bandenna kai nōḍi bhō"

or

"I hunted, not knowing was it town or hill-side :
Look at my hand, ye brave warriors !
Look at my hand, ye learned folks !
I fought and won, and placing my helm
Upon Guhēśvaraliṅga, I've come."

Here 'kai nōḍi' has two meanings. When I am hunting in the forest called body, please 'observe my hand' (namma kai nōḍiri), i.e., see my valour. Another meaning is 'read my hand,' if you know palmistry. He means he does not have ordinary lines. The line that is prominent in his hand is that of winning Guhēśvara only.[1]

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1. Śri Cennabasavarāja Dēśikendra Śivacārya, *Allayyana Beḷaku.*

In another vacana of his, Prabhu, using, like Basavanna, the word 'tumbi,' in its double meaning, has created a peculiar effect :

"tumbi bandare parimaḷa ōḍitta kaṇḍe
ēnu sōjiga hēḷā !
mana bandare buddhi ōḍitta kaṇḍe,
dēva bandare dēgula ōḍitta kaṇḍe,
Guhēśvara."

or

"I saw, at bee's approach, the fragrance flee :
Oh, what a wondrous thing !
I saw, at Mind's approach, the reason flee !
I saw, at God's approach, the temple flee,
O Guhēśvara !"

Here the word 'tumbi' means a 'bee' as well as 'perfection'. When it means a bee, the word 'parimaḷa' means a flower's fragrance. When it means perfection, 'parimaḷa' means 'dēhavāsane,' or 'infatuation of body'. He suggests that, through the soul's experience of perfection, the awareness of body has ceased. 'mana bandare buddhi ōḍittu' means 'when Consciousness dawns, the sense of difference ceases.' 'dēva bandare dēgula ōḍittu,' means 'when Self is realised the sense of body ceases.'[1]

These figures of speech have occurred so spontaneously and exquisitely. As regards figures of thought — they have taken shape as living images welling out of the divine experience of the Śaraṇas. The similes and metaphors, the analogies and comparisons they have used to extend the readers' area of experience. For they have come out of the wealth of the Śaraṇas' life-experience. Especially in the vacanas of Basavanna, Prabhu and such others, their many-sided personality, their wide experience and their lofty genius are revealed. So far, while dealing with their discipline, teaching and divine experience, we have incidentally referred to several vacanas of theirs. Here we may study a few more from the literary point of view.

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1. Deshpande, M. S., *Prabhuvina Prabhe*

The spoken word becomes literature only when it is born of deep and poignant experience. Such a word not only stirs the reader's heart but enriches his stock of experience. The poet, depending mainly on things familiar to the reader, infuses his fund of emotion into the thing to be seen by the latter, and therethrough he makes familiar what is unfamiliar. This is the basic objective of figures of speech and thought, which may be classified as simile, metaphor, hyperbole, etc. But when looked at from the poet's point of view it is the only natural way to communicate his feelings and emotions. This thing will become evident even when we take note of the extent and variety of figures used by the Śaraṇas.

But the Śaraṇas are not poets set on writing poetry. Nor are they interested in describing the beauties of nature. Theirs is the poetry of life. The beauty of life itself has become poetry in their words. What they have described is not the natural beauty of external phenomena; but the beauty of the inner Self. We find in the Śaraṇa literature all the different stations on the venturesome journey that the seeker's spirit undertakes with the object of realising the true nature of his spontaneous Self. Evanescence of worldly life and its futility, frailty of mind and its meanness, ostentatious bhakti, purity of heart, the importance of real devotion, the glory of Śaraṇas—to all these they have devoted serious thought against the background of the ideal of human life, and have set the ideal before the seekers in vivid terms. We may also trace the different stages of their mental advancement from the vacanas themselves. If the communication of intense and powerful feelings and emotions can become poetry, the Śaraṇas' vacana literature, too, may be regarded as poetry.

The theme of the Śaraṇas' poetry is the heart of the individual and is engaged in penetrating the mystery that binds it to the universe. Therefore, their heart is moved by the feelings incident to that bond. When those feelings find expression, they voluntarily fashion their own way of communication as well as the figures of speech or thought corresponding to the impulse of emotion. Their only object is to communicate their thoughts and feelings in such a way as to penetrate the

hearts of the readers. They have adopted all ways and means and all figures that are essential for it.

The words that they have uttered about the futility and evanescence of worldly life are able to sway the mind of the reader, howsoever worldly-minded he or she may be, towards self-introspection, at least for a moment. They are sorely pained and distressed to see people who waste their precious life, believing what is temporal to be eternal and what is vile to be noble. They have striven hard, presenting this by way of vivid and homely similes to the people, to turn their hearts towards the great and the sublime :

"My life is like a mouse
Ensconced in piles of bags :
No peace from it until it dies.
Until it dies, it pesters you ;
Until it dies it burrows holes.
Alas ! alas ! Lord, Kūḍala Saṅgama,
I am weary of this life !"

The simile he uses to say 'I am weary of this life,' is that of 'a mouse ensconced in piles of bags.' How effectively Basavanna's remark goes straight to our heart when we realise that we are in no way better than a mouse ! Even so we come across, in his vacanas on life's evanescence, similes such as :

"My plight is like a frog's
In the shadow of a snake..."

"A vowed sheep brought for a festival
Nibbles the tender leaves
Meant for the festoon."

"Like a frog caught in a serpent's mouth,
Who, hungry, pines for a flitting fly."

The same feeling Siddharāma, too, echoes !

"In the jaws of Rāhu,
The Saṁsāra, have I been,
I know not when he swallows
Nor when he spits me out ;
Nor when I meet death.

Pray pull me out of his mouth
And save me, O Kapilasiddha Mallinātha Lord !"

Cennabasavanna has, through an exquisite simile, expressed the same :

"Strives and struggles
A sparrow, mistaking
Somebody's home for its own —
And wealth, women and land —
Not knowing Lord Kūḍala
Cenna Saṅga is his maker !"

Ours too is as a sparrow's strife. This is what Prabhu remarks on worldly traffickers :

"In the cage of the triple-world,
In the whirl of Saṁsāra,
With gold as the breath of their being,
With woman as the breath of their being,
With land as the breath of their being,
In the swollen pride of that joy
They plunge and swim, alas !
The many-sided traffic has taken
Possession of them, O Guhēśvara !"

Another vacanakāra compares this Saṁsāra to a dense forest :

"In the terrific forest
Of Saṁsāra, missing my way
I suffer, O Lord.
Day and night, look, O Lord,
I have been dying in Saṁsāra."

Again he prays to God, comparing his Saṁsāra to a grave disease, to free him from it :

"Saṁsāra, the grave disease, O Lord,
Has harassed and, making me
A walking corpse, plagues me ;
Unable to set pace on the right path,
Teases me, mark, O Lord.
I beg of Thee, O Śiva :
Do Thou come as Guru,

Ministering the medicine of Thy grace
And the diet of the five-lettered spell.
O Nijaguru Svatantra Siddhaliṅgēśvara,
Cure me, out of Thy mercy,
From this disease of Saṁsāra."

Even so Ṣaṇmukhaswāmi dreads to see –

"Worlds upon worlds are caught —
Like a deer in a tiger's mouth,
Like a frog in a snake's —
In Māyā's mesh."

The Śaraṇas have, as they have revealed through significant and suggestive words the nature of Saṁsāra, exposed the frailty and ignorance of those who live under the illusion that the Saṁsāra is eternal. Basavanna's similes, which compare the mind to a country fig, to a monkey on a bough, to a dog riding in a palanquin, to a dog licking a sword's sharp edge for ghee, are unforgettable.

Some of his vacanas, which sound lyric cries of his soul, may be noticed here :

"O Lord, it's you who spread this green
Sense-pasture before my eyes !
What does a beast know ? It is drawn
To all that's green and grass.
Rid me of sense, and feed me, Lord,
With holiness till I have my fill !
Serve me true wisdom for my drink !
Look after me, O Lord
Kūḍala Saṅgama !"

"Make me, O Father, a crippled man
Who will not wander here and there.
Make me, O Father, a sightless man
Whose glances will not rove astray.
Make me, O Father, hard of ear
Lest I should hear of aught but Thee.
O Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama,
Keep me from all enticements free
But what will draw me to Thy feet."

"Make of my body, Lord, the pole;
Make of my head, the guard;
Make of my nerves the wires, O Lord,
And of my fingers the plectrum make;
Intone Thy two-and-thirty notes;
Thump on my heart to beat the time,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord!"

"Those who have money build
Temples to Śiva: what can I build?
A poor man, Lord, am I!
My body is the shrine,
Its pillars are my legs,
The golden pinnacle, my head.
Hear me, Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
There is destruction for what stands,
But not for that which moves!"

We notice in such vacanas the supreme height of pure feeling, transcending speech.

This vacana of his, which tells of the mind's infirmity and fickleness, goes straight to the reader's heart:

"Like a lizard darting about
A hedge, so is my mind, O Lord;
Like a chameleon who appears
One thing each several time,
So is my mind;
Like the condition of a flying-fox,
So is my mind!
Even as dawn breaking at the gate
For the blind man who wakes
At dead of night—
Is there, for the mere wish,
A disinterested piety,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord?"

They have also shown, through appropriate similes and metaphors, that such weak and mean minds cannot accomplish bhakti and that all attempts to set them on the spiritual path would very often go in vain:

"You put an iron ring about
A pumpkin, it must rot :
Would it grow fresh ?
You take a creature, mean of mind,
And give him Śiva-initiation—well,
Does he turn holy ? ... Same as ever was !
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord, it would be like
Setting a wretch apart, to be
A dedicated soul !"

"Worship an idol made of dung
With a campaka flower :
For all the show, the stink remains !
You wash and wash a doll of clay,
Day after day, — it turns to mud :
Its nature remains !
You give initiation to a man
Of worldly mind : how can devotion grow
In an evil man, O Lord
Kūḍala Saṅgama ?"

"If the philosopher's stone
Touches an iron ape,
What if it turn to gold
Or any other thing,
So long as its former form remains ?
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
What an impostor I —
Believing with little faith !"

"If you touch an iron dog
With the philosopher's stone,
It would be a golden dog
But not the philosopher's stone.
If you make a bhakta
Of a worldling, he
Would be one in symbolic garb
But not a real bhakta.
How can I call them bhaktas,

The worldlings who pour for bath,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord ?"

"What boots it
If you smear ash
On a jar of wine,
Unless it is pure within ?
For instance : unless you,
Guru's grace having crystallised,
Look upon Guru, Liṅga
And Jaṅgama as one ?"

Thus external correctives are of no avail. Basavanna asks in another vacana :

"How long soever a stone
May lie in water, can it
By soaking turn soft ?
However long I worship Thee,
What boots it, if I lack
A resolute mind ?
.....
....."

Dāsimayya has expressed the same by means of another image :

"One filled paddy into
A torn gunny-bag ;
He walked the whole night
In fear of toll ;
As the paddy spilt out,
Only an empty bag was left :
Such is the bhakti of
A mean-minded one, O Rāmanātha."

Elsewhere he, condemning an ostentatious bhakti, asks :

"If you brand your thigh,
Will it make your gait pure ?"

Observing that all who go to the battle do not fight, that the entire tamarind tree does not grow fruit, he affirms that when all sham and hypocrisy is winnowed out, one among a hundred or a thousand will remain a real bhakta. In one of his vacanas he has ridiculed the showy bhaktas :

"Trust not
The rogue's bhakti is real;
It is, O Rāmanātha,
Like the cat of a hermitage
Springing upon a rat!"

The cat in the hermitage is more contemplative than the hermit himself. But how long? Until it notices a rat in the corner; then it pounces on the rat. A bhakta should not be a copy of that rat—counsels Dāsimayya. The example of a 'cat's meditation' is a rare one and the more effective for being so.

In damning the sham piety which is offered in all pomp and pride just to get applause from the people, the Śaraṇas' shafts come out more pointed and poignant. Such a showy bhakti, they say,

"Is like an ox
That circles the oil-mill without sesamum."

Witnessing those who weary themselves in vain infatuation with things, saying, 'it is mine, it is mine,' they observe out of pity, "It is like a foolish washerman fussing over somebody else's saree." Note how Basavanna compares it to Mailāra:

"Mailāra is beautiful to see
But filled with straw within:
How well the outer hue
Become him, Lord!
My reason has become
As is a dog's sleep, or
The penance of a fool,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord!"

Such a bhakti cannot accomplish its goal. This is quite significantly expressed:

"A dog borne on the shoulders: how can it catch
A rabbit, Lord?
A warrior impotent to throw a spear:
He ought to blush
At his unfounded boastfulness.
How can I be a devotee,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord?"

We may notice here a few more vacanas which are richly suggestive, wherein Basavanna has stressed the need of inward purity and the futility of vain show :

"If you strike the anthill
Will the snake die ?
What if you perform
The severest penance,
Will Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Have trust in those
Whose heart is not pure ?"

"If you grow rich —
Like silk-cotton tree
Bearing flower and fruit –
What does it mean
Without true piety ?
What does it mean
If it yields fruit —
The snaky colocynth ?
What is it worth,
This beauty without
Good character ?
What is the use
If water from
The drain clears up ?
Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Does not approve
Of worthless men."

"What is it worth
If water from
The drain clears up ?
What is the loss
If idle gold
Is found elsewhere ?
What use is there
In mango-fruit
Up in the sky ?
Too high to pluck,

Too good to eat!
But those who know
The Śaraṇas
Of Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama,
It matters not at all
Where or what they be."

"What use is it
For a parrot to read?
He cannot say
'The cat, he comes!'"

Hence, of what use the worship which cannot free us from the cat called Saṁsāra—he asks.

"What if the iron knows
The alchemic stone?
What use the alchemy unless
The iron has ceased to be?
What use the light unless
The darkness leaves the house?
What use your worship too
Unless with heartfelt worshipping
Of Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama,
You tear off Karma's bonds?"

So, what is the use of a lamp that cannot dispel the darkness of the house? Basavanna says:

"A worship without love
And an unfeeling act,
Behold my brothers, is
A pictured loveliness
(No joy in its embrace),
A painted sugarcane
(No relish in its taste).
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
Without sincerity
It is no piety!"

Even so Mōḷigeyya Mārayya remarks that a showy bhakti is, like a tiger in the picture, lifeless:

"Can a tiger in a painting bite a man?
And can those who wear
God's emblems in this mortal world
Enjoy eternity?
The disinterested Śaraṇa,
O immaculate Mallikārjuna,
Claims to be out of this mortal world
Untrammelled by its sordidness."

Similarly, in the following vacana Mārayya emphasizes the need of discipline reinforced by purity of heart, by means of happy and graceful similes:

"Are many afraid
Of a poisonless snake?
Does any one fear
An unarmed warrior, just
Because he roars?
Does talking of Iṣṭa's outward look
Transform one to Prāṇaliṅga straight?
This is no certainty;
O Immaculate Mallikārjuna!"

The Śaraṇas, even as they have condemned the sham piety induced by pride and love of pomp, have also whole-heartedly extolled the rapture of bhakti that springs forth from the bottom of the heart, and the greatness of such bhaktas. In such vacanas, too, we witness the Śaraṇas' literary talents.

"Strong is the elephant: but could you say
Less strong the goad?
Nay, nay, not so!
Strong is the mountain: but could you say
The thunderbolt less strong?
Nay, nay, not so!
Strong is the darkness: but could you say
Less strong the light?
Nay, nay, not so!
Oblivion's strong: but could you say
The heart that loves Thee is less strong?

Nay, nay not so,
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !"

The same similes are used in a different way :

"The elephant fears the goad ;
The mountain, the thunderbolt ;
Darkness is afraid of light ;
The forest fears the fire ;
The five great sins fear, Lord,
The name of Kūḍala Saṅgama."

Ignorance is mighty as an elephant, the mountain, and the darkness of gross inertia. But to invoke the name of God with deep love and one mind is as a goad to the elephant, a bolt to the mount, a light to the dark. These repeated similes bring home to us the glory of His name. Allama Prabhu has given expression to the same feeling in another way :

"Waste not the day
In counting beads.
Waste not the day
In worshipping a stone,
Even a moment's love of God
Is itself enough.
Love of God for half a moment
At least is quite enough.
Could the fire's heat, O Guhēśvara,
Be found in water ?"

Here are a few more vacanas that speak of real bhakti :

"This is devotion : to be like
The channel of a flowing stream ;
To offer sacrificial gifts.
If, having offered, you can keep
What's left, Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Will be your friend !"

"Devotion done for pride of self
Is waste of substance ; speech
Divorced from deed
Is loss of wisdom.

To earn a reputation for charity
Without expense is like
An ornament for a braidless head!
A wavering devotion's one
That fails to reach
Amarēśvaraliṅga, Mārayya's love,
Even as clean water poured
Into a pitcher broken at the base!"

"Although the cuckoo in the woods may come
Into a house, does he perchance
Forget his woodland home?
Although the forest elephant may come
Into a house, does he perchance
Forget his forest haunt?
Although Kūḍala Saṅga's Śaraṇas may come,
In sheer oblivion, to this mortal earth,
Do they perchance forget the God who is
Their beginning, middle and their end?"

"Don't you worship at dawn,
Don't you worship at dusk.
But you must, whether it's
Day and night, worship incessantly.
Pray show me, O Guhēśvara,
Who performs such worship."

They, speaking of the greatness of the Śaraṇas who following such a bhakti have attained fulfilment, use a long series of similes.

"If you would trifle, thoughtlessly,
With Kūḍala Saṅga's Śaraṇas, you are
Like one who'd scratch his cheek
With a snake's hoods!
Like one who would untangle his knotted head
With a burning torch; like one
Who'll take his pleasure on a swing
Holding a tiger's whiskers; like one
Who ties up lime in his lap
And dives into a pool!"

Jests or light talk would not do with the great Śaraṇas; nor indifference and apathy. They lead to destruction.

For those who are indifferent, the Śaraṇas are like the hood of a snake, a tongue of flame; whereas for the seekers who, through intuitional awareness, revere them with devotion, they are the very incarnates of love:

"Holding a jaggery puppet in hand,
Wheresoever you kiss it
It is nothing but sweet.
Even if you nibble gently
Would the neem fruit be sweet?"

The Śaraṇas are sweet as puppets of jaggery, but the wicked are bitter as neem fruit. Notice what Prabhu says:

"To a flowing stream
All body is legs;
To a burning fire
All body is tongues;
To a blowing wind
All body is hands...
O Guhēśvara,
To your Śaraṇas
The whole body is Liṅga!"

The way of life of such Śaraṇas cannot be evident to the common eye. So humble and unassuming are they:

"No one can see
The ruby dropped upon the road,
Nor buried hoard.
Can they who are a prey to death
Discern the life-restoring plant?
The Śivaśaraṇas appear
As if to their too hopeless eyes
The alchemic stone was but a stone!
O Saṅgana Basavanna,
Behold the majesty
Of Maruḷaśaṅkara,
Our Guhēsvara's Śaraṇa!"

Their presence or coming is not so glamorous as to attract all eyes nor one to stir waves of unrest in the public. They movelessly move 'as a gentle breeze carries perfume,' but not 'as a storm that blows and breaks or uproots shrubs and trees'—says Prabhudēva.

Thus the Śaraṇas have amply succeeded in making every theme that they dealt with reach the heart of the reader. Their profound experience of life, their penetrating insight that looks at society with an open mind, their manifold knowledge and versatile genius—out of these their words issued, imagination blossomed and figures and images emerged. Therefore their vacanas have become living lyrics. The poetic fervour that is noticed in their vacanas has not only revealed itself in their effective expression and the figures of speech and thought they have employed, but also incorporated the various progressive stages of their spiritual awareness. Their genius has covered every shade of expression, from the utterance of the seekers who have wrestled with social iniquities and differences, to the joyous exclamations of their transcendent souls become one with the Eternal. This can be reckoned roughly in three forms as: 'empirical consciousness,' 'detached consciousness' and 'transcendental consciousness.'

The basic material of poetry is the external world. But the greatness of poetry is decided by the spirit in which the poet reacts to, and the inspiration he draws from, that world. The poetic awareness mirrors the beauty of external things and incidents; at times it interprets them; it occasionally, going beyond them, presents before our eyes the ideal world order that may become possible, if not now, at least in the future. The Śaraṇas' poetic wisdom has always flown into this great ideal. Even in the midst of worldly diversities and inequalities its pace is always turned in that direction. At times, it resents even the mention of worldly words and deeds; it turns its gaze in words, seeking the ultimate nature of its own self.

"Making the knowledge
Sleep as a child
In the cradle of ignorance
Hung by the ropes of all

The Vēdas and Scriptures,
The Mother, Illusion,
Rocks the cradle and
Sings lullabies.
Unless the cradle cracks,
The ropes are cut, and the lullaby
Stops, Guhēśvara,
You cannot realise the Liṅga."

This vacana draws the graph of the mind's evolution of a Śaraṇa very well. Ātman, the incarnate of knowledge, has, been subject to the sway of ignorance, forgotten his native glory. He must, rending the clouds of ignorance, regain the true nature of his native Self,—says Allama Prabhu.

How to realise this? Two mutually opposing forces function in the body. If one tries to leap upwards, the other pulls it downwards. If one pulls this way, the other pulls that way. If some harmony is not found in this conflict, life shall be an idle waste. Prabhu has beautifully put it in an image here:

"What you call body
Is a loaded cart,
Its wheels, the legs.
Five persons drive the cart,
But do not accord
With one another.
If they drive it not
In accord with its drift,
The axle breaks, O Guhēśvara."

He has elsewhere compared the body to a great forest, and counsels caution in hunting the wild brutes therein. Though this vacana is a little long, it may be noted for its sustained imagery:

"I see no one who can
Conquer the body's plantain-grove;
The seven seas of the world
Encircle it in life's vast wood;
The five senses' poisonous rain pours and pours
Anger's huge tiger roars and roars;

The elephants of eight prides
Are stamping about ; the triple-shafted rain
Of lust is pouring ; jealousy,
Enormous serpent, is spitting fire ;
That child of sin called greed
Is chewing its cud ; the triple pain,
Like rain of fire, will not permit
Your stepping out ; mountains of self
Have fallen across our path ;
You cannot face the fear of ghosts
Called the five elements ;
Māyā, the ogress, devours raw flesh ;
The well of passions cannot be used ;
Infatuation's creeper tangles your feet ;
The sharp-edged sword of covetousness
Is not to be unsheathed... Unable to go
Into this plantain-grove, gods, demons, men
Have all gone crazy and run off.
Those who have eyes upon their soles,
Those who have eyes all over themselves,
Have also been put to shame ; but I
Have entered that plantain grove,
Have fought my way and, never touched
By thorn or bramble, have won
By knowledge the plantain-grove,
And crossed it safe ;
And dwelling in the ultimate trance
Of Guhēśvaraliṅga, I am a prisoner
Within tranquility !"

The great adventure which has, surmounting the social odds, the ups and downs usually apparent to empirical knowledge, culminated in the ecstasy of the union with Guhēśvaraliṅga, is witnessed here. Basavēśvara has elsewhere said :

"The body is basket, mind the snake.
See, how they live together,
The snake and basket !
You have no notion when

It may kill you,
No notion when he bites !
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
If I can worship Thee
Day after day,
That is the charm !"

We notice here the daring attempt of the seeker whose empirical awareness which, still living in this world, yet rises up transcending it.

For the progressive evolution of this consciousness, even as the body that at times turns hostile, mundane events and worldly persons prove formidable hurdles. Prabhu's vacanas, which tell of the usual ways of the world may be marked :

"If you are hungry
Can you eat cowhage and nettles ?
What boots the wealth of asking
If it is not for emergency ?
You rub the sandal wood
On a grindstone, but would you on a brick ?
Do Rambha's words sound
Elegant to a stupid fellow ?
The seer can talk with the seer,
But could he with fools ?
It is like a crow on the tree cawing,
'It is black' when a cuckoo
Coos beside the lake.
When you would milk a barren cow
In famine, and milk it with a pot in hand,
It is as if the pot cracked and the hand broke ;
Mark it O Guhēśvara."

"We must not listen
To their words, O Guhēśvara,
Who have made
Night of day and day of night,
Good of evil and evil of good,
Worldling of a bhakta and
Bhakta of a worldling."

"They see not ahead
Nor behind in the joy of words
Nor themselves they know,
Therefore the three worlds
Have gone waste, O Guhēśvara."

Until the seeker rises above such events and persons he cannot accomplish his mental development.

"As a dog hisses and barks
At a loaded buffalo,
They themselves believe not
Nor let others, that believe, believe.
They themselves offer not bhakti
Nor let others, that offer, offer.
Those that bear not to see
The bhaktas who offer bhakti. . ."

"Like a fool who,
Without noticing a dead ass
Lying in his own plate,
Discerns a fly in another's,
They try to pick holes in others
Without shedding their own,
Of body and mind. . .
Such curs, I hate to see,
O Akhaṇḍēśvara !"

"If you form a fellowship
With the ignorant,
It is like having a spark
By hitting a stone against another.
But if you form a fellowship
With the wise,
It is like drawing butter
By churning curds.
For one abiding in Liṅga,
O Cenna Mallikarjuna,
The fellowship of those
Who have not shed their traits of breath
Is a loss."

"When a dog sees a corpse
It cannot but bite it.
The mind cannot but melt
At the sight of money.
Butter cannot but melt
At the sight of fire.
The world loves and likes a lie,
O Mahāliṅga Guruśiva Siddhēśvara Prabhu!"

Thus, in very many vacanas, we can see, the Śaraṇas have very effectively described the worldly ways that check the growth of the spiritual consciousness. The mischievous charge that Basavanna had misappropriated the treasury of Bijjaḷa must have been laid by such evil-mongers. Basavanna has unequivocally repied to them :

"When a stream of milk flows past
The village, why should I pursue
A cow reluctant to give milk ?
Why should I lose all shame and decency ?
So long as Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Is within me, why should I care
For Bijjaḷa's treasured hoard ?"

In dread of such slanderers one must not forsake the path of truth. Notice how Basavanna puts it :

"Whoever is angry, what do they do to us ?
Even if the entire town
Be angry, how do they deal with us ?
Let them not give their daughters to our sons !
Let them not set a platter for our dogs !
Can a dog bite
One mounted on an elephant,
So long as Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
Is on our side ?"

Thus the Śaraṇas, as they rid themselves of all traits, incidents and persons that put hurdles in the path of the evolving empirical consciousness, also sought and got the fellowship of saints and seekers who aided and assisted them in their spiritual discipline. Notice how Basavanna emphasizes the need of the Śaraṇas' fellowship :

"When fire is kindled, as
Tree rubs on tree, does not the whole tree burn?
When the great illumination dawns
By contact of Experients,
Do not the body's traits all burn?
Therefore, O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
Show me the great Experients!"

"When tanks and streams and wells
Lay themselves bare, you see
Pebbles and weeds and oyster shells;
But when the ocean-bed lies bare,
It is gems you see!
When Kūḍala Saṅga's Śaraṇas
Lay bare their hearts and speak,
It is Liṅga that you see!"

Even so Śaraṇas' words will but enkindle the fire of Knowledge.

"Unless the law's at work
At an auspicious point of time,
No pearl can grow from water,
Nor water grow from pearl.
Unless the holy Guru's hand
Is raised to bless,
No understanding penetrates the mind.
Without a mind that's merciful
And loves our maker, Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama,
The Śiva-hood cannot be grasped."

Basavanna has stressed here the need of a Guru to show one the Divine path. Only through the Guru's grace is, the first step on the path of mental evolution made at an auspicious moment. To have such a longing and know its worth is only possible for bhaktas. Ṣaṇmukhaswāmi asks:

"The swan knows the flavour of milk,
But how can a water-fowl?
The crazy elephant knows the taste of sugarcane,
But how can a lamb that nibbles but leaves?

A bee knows the fragrance of a flower,
But can a buzzer burrowing holes in the wood?"

Thus, in all such vacanas we notice the initial step of the spiritual evolution. They have repeatedly insisted that the seekers should, through the fellowship of, and conference with, the holy saints, find a way of developing the empirical consciousness and of ascending higher and higher transcending it. As Dāsimayya states,

"A babe in the womb
Cannot know its mother's identity,
Nor the mother the babe's.
The bhaktas in the lure of Māyā
Do not know God,
Nor He them, O Rāmanātha."

The Śaraṇas' empirical consciousness longs to tear off the veil of Māyā's magic, and, coming out of it, to know the identity of the mother; and it is also revealed in their vacanas that their poetic consciousness, too, correspondingly rises to further heights.

The next step on the path of the evolution of their consciousness may be called detached consciousness. Here the detachment that, overcoming the social differences and individual handicaps, rises to a greater height is noticed; and it is also manifested vividly and effectively as poetic intuition that stands as witness to the world:

"The body of an active devotee
Must be even as the trunk
Of a plantain-tree:
When, peel by peel, you strip
Its outer tegument,
There must not be a core behind...
Our own have swallowed the fruit
That grew on top,
Along with the seed itself.
Mark you, Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
No more a birth for me!"

Basavanna hereby suggests that all deeds must be done in the spirit of detachment, that the awareness of their success and failure is a seed of bondage which must not be allowed to shoot up. Prabhu has also similarly cautioned those who live in dread of Saṁsāra and therefore become ascetics :

"If in dread of a thief
You rush to the woods,
Will not a tiger eat thee ?
If in dread of the tiger
You enter an anthill,
Will not a serpent bite thee ?
If in dread of death
You become a bhakta,
Will not your Karma eat thee ?
What shall I say of the hypocrites,
O Guhēśvara, who have become a prey to death ?"

So one must, living in the midst of Saṁsāra, be a seeker. Whatever walk of life one may be in, one must attain a spirit of complete detachment through good deeds :

"Without the churning of action
Could the sweet be crushed out of sugarcane ?
Without the churning of action
Could the ghee be drawn out of milk
Without the churning of action
Could the fire be sparked out of wood ?
Then, for the holy one who would know
Our Guhēśvaraliṅga in himself,
Mark ye, brothers, right deeds are the only means."

"Of what avail
The ghee in a cow's stomach ?
Does the cow grow fat day by day ?
Therefore, if you, feeding
And milching it, boiling
Its milk and drawing out ghee,
Give it to drink, it can
Grow fat day by day...."

Even so, to realise the Divine in one's own self churning by way of right deeds is essential, insist the Śaraṇas.

"Even a kite flying in the sky
Must have a leading-string;
Even a hero must exert himself;
Can a cart move without the ground?
Without the union of aṅga and Liṅga
One cannot be bodiless.
Can one be said to be bodiless,
O Prabhu,
Without the union with
Kūḍalacennasaṅga?"

Like a kite, the witness spirit of the seeker, though it must fly high, yet it must not lose contact with the leading-string of right discipline. Mahādēviyakka speaks of this bodilessness:

"The pearl grows out of water, and so do
The hailstone and salt too.
Salt melts, the hailstone melts, but none hath seen
The dissolution of a pearl.
Men of the world still bear
The burden of the world despite
The touch of Liṅga; while I,
By touching Thee, have reached
Perfection, O Cenna Mallikarjuna Lord!"

Unlike the worldlings who dissolve in saṁsāric pains, the real self-detached bhaktas reach their goal through action:

"After the body is made over,
Where else is it?
After the wealth is made over
Where else can its enjoyments be?
All these are stark illusion.
I cannot bear to see them who say
They have given.
To have become, by giving,
A bhakta, is not agreeable to Thy Śaraṇas,
O Guru Kapilasiddha Mallinātha."

Thus Siddharāma also suggests the way that leads to the attainment of the witness spirit. The work that is done in the spirit of absolute surrender without an awareness of having done, is pure work, worship. "Pure work is the way to heaven; pure work is an increase of knowledge; what matters what you wear or don so long as you are untainted by the triple impurity?"

"Unless you grow the food you eat,
How can your hunger be appeased?
Unless you practise acts and works
How can you grasp pure Consciousness
When can you feed on uncooked food,
Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna?"

Through all such similes and metaphors Siddharāma specifies the path that leads the seeker's soul to the state of utter self-detachment. Mōḷigeya Mārayya counsels that the seeker must know the art of burning the village while living therein, or the secret of renunciation in work:

"You, living, in the village,
Must burn it:
Could you, living outside?
You must, doing the work,
Know it;
Could there be knowledge
Without work, O Lord? ..."

Even so, one that knows the secret of renunciation in work need not deny oneself in order to realise his Self. Dēvara Dasimayya asserts that the Śaraṇas, though ever engaged in work, yet realised their great Self:

"What need of breaking
A pot to witness space?
Does it not suffice if you know
What is inside the pot is also space?
What need of tearing cloth
To see the threads?
Does it not suffice if you know

The cloth itself is threads ?
What need of cutting a bracelet
To see gold ?
Does it not suffice if you know
The bracelet itself is gold ?
What need of annihilating oneself
To realise the Supreme ?
Does it not suffice if you know
Yourself are the Supreme ?
Pray tell me, O Ramanātha."

Here is what Siddharāma says :

"In triple purity, I call,
O Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna Lord,
Him the Jaṅgama who,
Having bath of no water,
Offering flowers of no tree,
Worships with no hands."

As Prabhu says elsewhere, 'one must worship with perfume of no flower'. If you offer water from a tank and flowers of a tree, it would not be real worship. You must worship with the heart for water and with knowledge for a flower. Mark what a splendid portrait of a Jaṅgama Siddharāma depicts here :

"Equanimity is his ascetic garb,
The boundless is his sacred ash,
Human compassion, his taintless Rudrākṣi,
Renunciation is the cloth to cover his loins,
Complete detachment his waist band —
Lo, all-perfect, our Jaṅgama..."

The eminent one who stands at such a height of mental evolution needs no other rank or position. And he who has cut off worldly obligations is a real Śaraṇa. Siddharāma characterizes him :

"For the swan frolicking in
A sea of milk, is there
A need of any other milk ?
For the bee that flits over
A fragrant flower, is there.

A need of any other scent?
For a frog dwelling in the sea
Is there a need of any other water?
For a babe sucking the breast
Is there a need of milk and water?
The Śaraṇa abiding in
The all-bestowing Liṅga,
Does he need anything else?
Pray tell me, O Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna."

Mōḷige Mārayya advises that the seeker must himself, through himself, realise his Self:

"As we see the shadow
Of a lamp in its own light,
As we see, looking into
The mirror, a mote in our eye,
One must oneself know,
Through oneself, one's own Self.
How can he know Thee
Who knows not himself?..."

The seeker who has once attained to the height of such absolute detachment cannot come down again and be bound. Notice how Ṣaṇmukhaswāmi expresses it:

"Water congeals into a pearl,
But does a pearl become water again?
Milk, congealing, turns to ghee,
But does ghee turn to milk again?
When a man born of man
Has once, through Guru's grace,
Become Śiva's ornament,
Would he become a man
Again, O Akhandesvara?"

The revered ones who help the seeker attain to this height are real Gurus. It matters not who they be, "What matters whether the mirror is mine or mother's? Is it not enough if I see my reflection in it?" Even so, whosoever may be the Guru who reveals One's real Self, one should not make any discrimination

in respect of such a Guru. The seeker who does his duties with such a bent of mind under the guidance of such a Guru, will assuredly transcend all lower levels of consciousness and attain to the ultimate height—says Mōḷige Mārayya :

"Like a pot that is
Tied at the tip of a crane,
If the virtuous press it,
It is as drawing water
From the bottom and supplying to the bed ;
He alone is the liberated in life,
O Mallikārjuna the immaculate,
Who, knowing the Thing that abides in all,
Could be free from births."

As the water drawn from the depth is distributed to the bed, the holy spread everywhere the light of the truth that they have seen through constant effort. Their consciousness may be regarded as "samarasaprajñā", or the Wisdom of Consubstantial Union.

Consubstantial union itself is the ultimate goal of the Śaraṇa path. Here, even the seeker's desire to know the Divine being gone, he becomes the knowledge itself. Shedding the sense of the twain, he becomes the One, indivisible and perfect. His spiritual consciousness, growing into fullness, becomes one with the universal consciousness. We have already witnessed, in their expression of their divine experience, the inexpressible majesty in words. It is "like the salt in water," "like the fire in the wood burning the wood itself," "like a mountain of camphor caught by fire," "like shooting a waxen dart into a pile of burning coal ;" by means of such similes Prabhu has attempted to express that experience. He describes that majesty :

"Once having known,
We cannot invoke It ;
Nor, forgetting, worship It.
Void is neither sown,
Nor grown ; neither
Reaped nor sold."

"It is neither within
Nor without. What it
Has become I know not,
It is neither today nor
That day nor any day."

He metaphorically asks :

"Will a shrine of mist support
A sunlight pinnacle !"

As the light of oneness pervades the body, the tantalising mist of corporal traits melts away. In their words, uttered from that height, the light of this ineffable consubstantial union shines. Witness the majesty of a jīvanmukta (liberated-in-life) in the following vacana :

"The consubstantial union is
Like a rare pearl
Set in pure gold ;
Like the light within
The crystal vase !
Like the charm of
Perfume married to wind,
Is the kinship, O Guhēśvara,
Of him that has realised
Consubstantial union."

Thus the body of the liberated-in-life is not an earthly body. It is a crystal vase that breathes and enshrines the supreme light within. This vacana is a fine example of how the joy of union has manifested itself in poetic medium. The phenomenal body is here transmuted into a crystal body that mirrors the light of the Divine. Finally it has itself become the self-effulgent Light.

On the bond that binds Śiva and His devotees with the universal power that abides everywhere, the Saranas' ultimate wisdom has expressed itself as follows :

"As a spark in stone,
As an image in water,
As a tree in the seed,
As silence in speech,

So Ṭhou in Thy devotee,
O Guhēśvara."

"As a trove hid in the ground,
As a flash hid in the cloud,
As a ray of light hid in the void,
As light hid in the eye,
So art Thou, O Guhesvara."

"As a vessel made of clay,
As an ornament made of gold,
As a hailstone made of water,
How can the world made of the Absolute
Be different, O Sakalēśvara Lord?"

"One is the sun
Mirrored in the water
Of a thousand vessels;
Are there many more?
Thou alone art the Godhead
That in all bodies dwells and moves:
I see none else, O Akhaṇḍēśvara."

"Though one who's worshipped, you stood
Aloof;
Though in a body, you are
Disembodied;
Though a source of delight, you are
Immaculate;
In all things you transcend
The primal and essential form,
O Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna Lord,
Revealing your real form to me
In a tiny speck."

"As the spark in a stone
Rests in ashes, O Lord,
Prey repose me in Liṅga.
As the wind hugs the perfume,
Pray repose me in Liṅga...

The majesty within Thy majesty,
O Rēkaṇṇapriya Nāginātha,
Like the oil hid, O Lord,
In the light of a lamp,
Pray repose me in Liṅga."

"When Will grows strong
It appears as Liṅga,
Otherwise as a stone.
When Will empties itself,
It may look as anything,
O Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna."

"Can the spark in the stone
Kindle?
Can the tree in the seed
Rustle?
Guhesvara's majesty,
Being unapparent,
Does not shine out
For the common eye:
He only knows it
Who has tasted the joy
Of the Experience!"

All such vacanas reveal vividly the height of their mental evolution..

To accomplish, through this intuition of the consubstantial union, the integral Life Divine is an ideal set before the soul. Unless it accomplishes the ideal one day or other, it has no other alternative, insist the Śaraṇas:

"The rainbow that appears
In the sky, where can it dissolve
Save in the sky itself?
The whirlwind that appears
In the wind, where can it dissolve
Save in the wind itself?
The sparks that appear
From fire, where can they disappear

Save in the fire itself?
The froth and foam, the spray and the wave
That appear on the sea,
Where can they dissolve
Save in the sea itself?
He, the integrally united with the Self,
Who has manifested in the Supreme
That abides since time and timelessness,
Where can he dissolve
Save in the Supreme Itself,
O Akhaṇḍēśvara ?"

"All lamps that touch
The light, become the light;
All rivers that touch
The sea, become the sea;
All things that touch
Prasāda, become Prasāda;
All aṅgas that touch
Liṅga, become as Liṅga:
All who touch Thee,
O Sakalēśvara Lord,
Become Thyself!"

The body of such a jīvanmukta, or liberated-in-life, Uriliṅga Peddi compares to a royal palace:

"In the mansion of body
The great God is king.
He, being seated on the throne of mind
And eating such dishes as
Sound, touch, form, taste and smell,
Served in the plates of the five senses
By his servants, the four subtler senses,
Has personified the bliss: mark,
O Viśvēśvara, dear to Uriliṅgapeddi."

This is the state where the hurdles themselves are made to render service and the bliss is experienced. This is the highest attainment of the integral intuition.

Thus we witness in the Śaraṇa literature the different levels of their poetic intuition. Literature is not a thing that provides entertainment to the mind and serves as a means for whiling away time. It incorporates, as it should, all the feelings and all the levels that elevate and ennoble our life. Then, only then, does literature as well as the life of the literateur attain self-fulfilment. Such are the Śaraṇas who, developing an integral outlook and applying it in literature, raised literature to its ultimate height.

The high spiritual ideals that the Śaraṇas attained, their vision of life, the path they trod, the height they scaled, the trail they blazed—all have emerged in the form of vacanas. The language used is simple; the thoughts expressed are lofty. As we have noticed so far, a gifted expression that cautions and guides people, by means of words in current use, of incidents of daily life familiar to common folk, and of similes and metaphors, towards a new experience and a new life, is revealed in the vacanas.

Several beautiful utterances that occur in the vacanas have turned out to be proverbs and adages popular enough to have become part of the people's life. We also come across in vacana literature many an utterance of an aphoristic type which gives, as the perennial springs that supply as much water as we draw out, as much meaning as we burrow out of them. For instance:

1. He who can unite without seeking is a Śaraṇa.
2. A Śaraṇa if one knows; if one forgets, an ordinary man.
3. A body may be thin;
   But should a heart be thin?
4. Nobody is for anybody, so!
   The fallen has no friend!
5. Why should one, after rising to the height, bear to be born again to this world?
6. Greed is servitude, lack of it mastery.
7. Anger, the mother, turns up when you lift up greed, the child.
8. Alive, he is not bound; acting, he's not defiled.
9. He's hungry, having eaten; loving, a celibate.
10. One still can stand where burnt the hearth:

But could one stand where burnt the earth ?

11. How many days will the packed food last ?
12. If you run into a wood for fear of a thief, you cannot escape the tiger (You are between the devil and the deep sea).
13. Work is worship.
14. You cannot, by clapping, drop the fruit from the stalk.
15. Not all who flourish a sword use it to cause wounds (Barking dogs do not usually bite).
16. A pariah is the man who slays,
    A pariah, if he eats the carrion.
17. Should one in anger pour
    The water for the bath, it is
    A stream of blood !
18. Devotion done for pride of self
    Is waste of substance.
19. Winnow while the wind is blowing (Make hay while the sun shines).
20. Why, Sir, be angry with those
    Who're angry with you ?
21. No use stripping your body if your mind is not stripped.
22. He who, knowing himself, knows who he is, is God.
23. If one knows oneself, his self-knowledge is Guru.
24. What need of a barn for one who has reaped an inexhaustible harvest ?
25. The whole world is good to one who is good himself.
26. Compassion is the root
    Of all religious faith.
27. God is but one, many His names.
28. If you believe, it's grace ; a poison if you don't.
29. To eat with thought of oneself alone, is to eat poison.
30. If you understand yourself there is no other.
31. Act as you speak (Be true to your word).
32. If you should speak, your words should be
    Pearls that are strung upon a thread.
33. Failing to see what must be seen
    The entire world is lost.

34. The sinner's wealth serves not a worthy cause —
Only to expiate his sins!
35. In practising religion, you should not desire either reward or high rank in Heaven.
36. Why do you need a rosary if you meditate like a crane?
37. The meditations of a crane are like a crocodile's love.
38. If space itself is naked, who will cover it?
39. How can the creeper feel the weight
Of its own fruit?
40. If a mountain feels cold, that blanket have you for it?
41. I have time to gather dung-cakes, but not to cook and eat.
42. The plantain-tree knows only one fruitoning, the good man a single word.
43. This mortal world is but the Maker's mint.
44. What use to shave your head clean, if you will is not void?
45. Can a cat made of clay touch a mouse made of gold?
46. Greed in the heart that is Māyā.
47. How longsoever you may wash
A lump of coal,
You cannot make it white!
48. To a bhakta who performs his rites, the heart itself is a witness.
49. The word they speak
Is the Effulgent Liṅga.
50. He's Uma's Lord when he sports; when he pauses in his sport, he is Svayambhu.
51. All worldly cares must cease in you if you would be a virtuous man.
52. The piety, where husband and wife worship as one, is pleasing to Śiva.
53. Virtue is nothing but truth.
54. If all your life is spent on drill,
Where is the time to join a fight?
55. Lo, a sorrow vast as ocean for a joy as tiny as mustard seed.

56. No sunshade can shield the man who would battle with the thunderbolt.
57. Self-centred piety
Is Karma's foundation-stone.
58. Devotion for an end
Is but a waste of vows!
59. One does not look for butter with milk in one's hand.
60. Association with a snake is good
Provided you can draw its fangs.
61. What signifies how many mouths
An anthill has? where the snake is
That is the only place!
62. If you strike the anthill
Will the snake die?
63. Does one lay a floor with a bandicoot buried in it?
64. A dog borne on the shoulders: how can it catch
A rabbit, Lord?

In these as well as in such other utterances, many in number, the wide experience of the Śaraṇas is seized; and they have almost become mirrors that reflect their words and deeds. They gave to the Kannada language vigour and vitality so as to be strong enough to capture a vista of meaning in a few words and, by pressing the stamp of their lofty minds upon it, enriched it to its fullness.

The Śaraṇa literature formed, in consequence, an outstanding landmark in the history of Kannada literature. It is informed by their many-sided genius, mystic experience and spiritual exercises, and has shaped itself in several forms. The way of their presentation, the manner of their expression, the similes, metaphors and other figures they have made use of, their treatment of the theme and the resultant effect—all these reveal the peculiar strength of the vacana literature. Along with these there are other vacanas of a special order which need our notice here. They are known as 'beḍagina vacanagaḷu', or enigmatic vacanas.

Enigmatic Vacanas or Puzzles

What we come across in the enigmatic vacanas is not the skill of a pun. A 'pun' means playing upon a word with more than one meaning. But in the enigmatic vacanas, if the literal meaning is one, the underlying meaning is another; and the resulting experience is altogether different.

"I saw—
That when the mind conceived,
The hand brought forth,
And the ear imbibed
The flavour of camphor..."

In this vacana of Prabhu's, 'when the mind conceived' means what the mind desired. The two lines mean 'the hand got what the mind desired'; while the flavour of camphor means 'a statement emits this smell'. Prabhu elsewhere says:

"Five serpents have one body and two teeth,
I saw the corpse, dead of the serpent's bite, move..."

The surface meaning of the lines is absurd. But each word has a symbolic meaning applicable to the context. The five serpents symbolise the five senses. Body stands for mind, and the two teeth are its doubts and resolves. The corpse is an ignorant soul. Now the lines mean: The five senses are the five faces of the body called mind. When such a mind clouds the soul with its doubts and resolves, the latter, losing its native glory, would be as good as dead. His revolving in the cycle of births is as a dead corpse moving. Only when he knows the Absolute shall he be free from this vicious circle.

Thus, without directly telling what is to be told, to tell it in the form of a riddle or puzzle, is 'beḍagu.' These, unlike the lovely vacanas that are the spontaneous out-pourings of the heart charged with lyric rapture, do not go straight to the reader's heart. They may be compared to a coconut. Before we eat the kernel we must break open the hard nut and its outer shell. So we must strain ourselves to understand the inner core of these vacanas. Even then some remain not completely understood. Only those who know the traditions of the Faith as thoroughly as a 'myrabolam in the palm' and are well versed in

vacana literature, may make them out clearly and interpret them correctly. Such are these 'beḍagina', or enigmatic, vacanas.

The delight derived from these vacanas is more in the nature of an intellectual feat than of aesthetic enjoyment. However, these form a separate and equally important section of the vacana literature. Almost every Śaraṇa has written vacanas of this type, at least one or two. Thus their number is considerable. We find a few such among Basavanna's vacanas, too, in whom, fund of devotion that he is, such intellectual quibbles and tricks are very rare. If they are very few among Basavanna's vacanas, they are most numerous among Prabhu's. It is not known why Prabhu's genius, which could have and has accomplished admirable things through direct and plain expression, should have been swayed towards enigmatic vacanas. Nonetheless, in the hands of such a great genius they acquired an added vigour and a metallic lustre. As a consequence, we find in them, instead of dry and dull inconsistencies, the flight of Prabhu's imagination soaring to an unprecedented height. Let us consider here such vacanas, mainly of Prabhu's, and a few of other vacanakāras :

"When a dear said he,
Riding a tiger's back,
Returned after grazing,
I was amazed;
When he said he,
Going to an ogress' house,
Returned, after sleeping,
I was amazed.
When he said he,
Going to Yama's den,
Returned alive,
I was amazed, O Guhēśvara."

This is one of Prabhu's enigmatic vacanas. Here the word deer is used in the sense of jīva. This jīva, riding on the back of a tiger (time, or the phenomenal world), grazed the grass of sensual pleasures and returned. It means that the individual

soul, who has forgotten himself in the saṁsāric joy, now, waking up, strives to free himself from it. Through Guru's grace he rides on the back of the tiger and returns to his native home. Similarly, the same sense runs in the rest of the lines. Rakkasi, or ogress, means Māyā. The individual soul, dwelling in the body resting on the five elements which themselves are charged with Māyā, slept unaware of itself, but again found its path back home. This bondage of worldly life, a cycle of births and deaths, is, in a sense, Yama's (god of death) den; it is a wonder that the jīva that had been to this den has returned alive! Thus Prabhu was astonished to see the three wonders. The central idea of the entire vacana is that the soul that has forgotten his self will become the Supreme Soul when he knows himself, shedding his corporal traits and imbibing Divine traits. Another vacana of his expresses the same idea in a different form.

"Where is the cuckoo, and where the mango-tree?
And yet they meet!
Where is the myrabolam, child of the hills,
And where the sea-bred salt?
And yet they meet!
Even so have we met, you and I,
O Guhēśvaraliṅga;
Even so!"

Let us now look at another vacana of his:

In Kṛtayuga, if the holy Guru,
Beating his disciple, gave him instruction,
'Be it your will, good Sir,' he said!
In Trētāyuga, if the holy Guru,
Rebuking his disciple, gave him instruction,
'Be it your will, good Sir,' he said!
In Dvāparayuga, if the holy Guru,
Threatening his disciple, gave him instruction,
'Be it your will, good Sir,' he said!
In Kaliyuga, if the holy Guru,
Bowing to his disciple, gave him instruction,

'Be it your will, good Sir,' he said !
I was amazed, O Guhēśvara,
At the chivalry of the rules of Thy time !"

He has very skilfully developed the double meaning up to the end. One is an ordinary or surface meaning, the orthodox meaning. Religion had four legs in the Kṛtayuga, three in the Trētāyuga, two in the Dvāpara; and in the Kaliyuga it is limping on one leg only. If we are to accept this interpretation, it means that the disciples in the Kṛtayuga were modest and submissive enough to welcome punishment. In the Trētāyuga things had changed and the teacher had no scope to punish his disciples. He could reprove them at the most. By the time of the Dvapara he could just growl at them. But in the Kaliyuga things have come to such a pass that the teacher himself must bow to his pupil. This interpretation may sound reasonable perhaps. But this itself is not its final interpretation. If we carefully read it we can arrive at its correct meaning. "When the Guru gave instruction by punishing, reproving, scolding and saluting—I said—be it so my Lord'—Prabhu utters these words as if to himself. When considered from an individual's point of view, the disciple is but one. Only the time changes. Seen in this sense we have to explain the words Kṛta, Trētā, Dvāpara and Kaliyuga in a sense other than the customary one. What is this meaning then? That itself is the secret of this vacana.

'In the Kṛtayuga' means in the initial stage of the Guru-disciple relationship. The time when the jīva, which was grazing on the back of the tiger, wakes up to seek the Guru's protection. In that state the disciple is not only separate from the Guru but his most loyal slave. After a certain period of training the disciple acquires part of the Guru's power; abstracting himself from his senses, he is now filled with love for Liṅga. Now the Guru need not punish him; a word of reproach now and then is enough. This constitutes, in the course of the disciple's training, the Trētāyuga. Then comes the Dvāpara. Here the disciple further assimilates the nature of his Guru. Being conscious of Liṅga in all parts of his body, he now embodies the spirit of 'sōhaṁ', or I am He. Here no need of

reproach, just an angry word is enough. His consciousness is awake now. The next stage itself is the Kaliyuga. Here the disciples' training culminates in complete liberation; in this state of his disciple the Guru pays homage to him; and the sense of difference between Guru and disciple totally vanishes. Here we had better bring to our mind the sense of Prabhu's words already quoted before :

"It is the Master's sport
To be disciple, and his
To be, in turn, the Master."

The same feeling he has expressed so ingeniously in this vacana. Let us have another enigmatic vacana of Prabhu :

"When one of a higher caste
Builds a home in a pariah-colony,
You see how he hasn't lost his caste as yet!
All members of his caste refused to look at him,
But all the really noble make friends with him.
No sooner he realises his caste is shed,
Than his stigma is gone, O Guhēśvara."

The high-caste man set up a home in the pariah colony. Notwithstanding, his caste was not spoiled. This man is jīva, of the nature of Śiva. He who, forgetting his divinity, comes to the world and is bound, is, as it were, a high-born one building a home in the pariah colony. But he, even after coming to the world, still remains a god. The Seers of Śiva, who offer their help, refused to see him in the beginning, but now offer their help and lead him up. What is needed most here is that he must realise he is bound and think of his self-redemption. "No sooner he realises his caste is shed, Than his stigma is gone, O Guhēśvara."

Words that every seeker must bear in mind. Judged from this point of view, it may be well seen how ridiculous is the distinction between man and man based on caste. To forget one's own divinity is losing one's caste as it were. When one realises this, one regains one's real caste. Unravel the riddle, and see what a great truth the vacana reveals!

Another vacana of his :

"In a dense jungle in the heart of a village
Five corpses are lying.
The mourners are many,
And so come and keep coming.
But the corpse burns not,
Nor the jungle decays.
The bier alone is consumed with fire,
O Guhēśvara."

We witness the tragedy of an ignorant being here. The body is likened to a village, wherein a jungle of ignorance has grown thick. The five senses that dwell there are here called corpses. He suffers through his insatiable craze for sensual pleasures. The more he tries to gratify them the more they torture him. Finally he brings about his own ruin.

In the following vacana he describes in another way the irreparable loss that the jīva, when clouded by ignorance, bears:

"Should a waxen doll catch fire
Water itself would grow athirst !
Dig O, O dig a well !
The digger of the well is dead,
And the well is dried up.
And so all the three worlds
Are lost, quite lost,
O Guhēśvara."

The body is a waxen doll. It burns in the fire of the triple pain. Unmindful of it, the ignorant jīva thirsts for sensual pleasures. Prabhu suggests it by saying 'water itself would grow athirst.' To allay its thirst, the mind digs a well of sensual pleasures and so digs its own ruin. Until the well dries up, there is no end to the craze for pleasure.

All the three worlds, yielding to this, must suffer. All jīvaś fallen into the fire of ignorance burn their bodies like waxen dolls. Prabhu pities such jīvas. He laughs at them in another vacana :

"From the heart's root
It germinated : lo !
It stretched and spread,

Swelled and bore several fruit :
Gave varied fruit to them
Who sought; when they
Fell into water, O Guhēśvara,
I laughed to watch them !"

In the centre of the heart the seed of ego shoots and grows, spreading its branches in several directions, into a big tree and bears poisonous fruits of varied size and alluring shape. The jīvas, lured by them, try to climb the tree and pluck them, but slip into a whirlpool. Hankering after worldly pleasures is like pursuing a mirage as it were. It plunges all, who are after it, into the sea of Saṁsāra. Not withstanding, people dote upon them. Prabhu laughs at such futile endeavour. Let us look into another vacana :

"Is it a tiger-headed deer, or
A deer-headed tiger ?
For the two have grown to a trunk.
No, it's neither tiger nor deer.
Nearby, chewing the cud,
Another beast has come.
If a headless trunk will browse
On dry leaves,
Is it a wonder, O Guhēśvara,
If one loses sight of
The green leaves ?"

This vacana sounds nonsensical, but we realise how meaningful it is when we know that the tiger is kāla-vyāghra, or time, the deer, the bewitching Māyā, and the chewing beast, prārabdha, or inheritance of the past to be experienced in the present. Caught in the grip of these three, the headless trunk, the brainless jīva, withers away, depriving itself of the essence of bhakti which is ever green like a fresh leaf.

Prabhu, who thus pities the headless people who, exposing themselves to the disease of worldly life, fall off like a dry leaf, offers a sure remedy against it, like a spiritual doctor, in the vacana that follows :

"Under the unaugmenting pain
Of a scorpion that stings not
Groaned the three worlds!
When one smears, without touching,
The round leaf of an unborn tree,
The pain is off, O Guhēśvara!"

Ignorance, or forgetfulness, is the scorpion which does not sting. Yet the burning pain caused by it destroys the entire life of man. The one and the only remedy against it is the leaf of an unborn tree, or conscience, without birth or death, and the right way of life, its leaf, right speech and right action. To do work without expectation of reward is to smear the leaf without touching it. In brief, the seeker should march, through renunciation in work, towards his goal. This is the panacea against ignorance.

Another vacana of Prabhu:

"Upon three walls
Were drawn three pictures.
The one on the first wall
Was still as a picture;
That on the second
Was moving to and fro.
That on the third was gone,
It cannot come back.
Far far beyond these three
Is Thy Śaraṇa, O Guhēśvara."

It can be interpreted in two ways:

The three walls are the three bodies—gross, subtle and causal—upon which the mind draws pictures. The picture drawn on the first, i.e. the gross body, is gross and inert. The mind that trusts only the gross body cannot attain the Divine consciousness. The mind that leans towards the subtle body oscillates between sensual pleasure and renunciation, between wisdom and foolishness, and is thus caught between dichotomies. When the same mind, with progressive discipline, achieves poise and the steadfastness of wisdom, it will be a picture drawn on

the causal body. Once it sheds all attachments to Saṁsāra it shall not come back.

Bearing the concept of consubstantial union of aṅga and Liṅga in mind, we may interpret this vacana in another way. The painter, Guru, paints the three Liṅgas, namely, Iṣṭa, Prāṇa, and Bhāva, on the three bodies. The Iṣṭaliṅga, the picture on the first wall, relying on the gross body, remains static. The picture on the second wall is the Prāṇaliṅga. It, pervading all the three bodies, moves in the form of power. If one is unconscious of its presence, it quits. The third is the Bhāvaliṅga. It, transcending Iṣṭa and Prāṇa, merges into the Self-realised Light. It indicates the ultimate state wherefrom no return is possible. The real Śaraṇa is one who has transcended the triple wall and the triple picture. Prabhu thus reveals the ultimate height of the consubstantial union.

He has pointed out in the next vacana the path that leads to such consubstantial union :

"On the top of a palmyra tree,
Lo, there is a well !
A rabbit came and grazed
The grass on its edge ;
I say it before Thee, O Guhēśvara :
They know not to cook the soul
Along with the body."

The body is the palmyra tree. There is a well on its top filled with the juice of Saṁsāra. When the grass of worldly bondage grows by its margin, the rabbit of jīva grazes it. It must be burnt along with the basic ego in the great fire of Knowledge. That is the consubstantial union with Liṅga.

Of the self-illusioned jīvas that foolishly suffer and groan in the clutches of the Māyā of ignorance he has remarked :

"An ogress has two brats, and she has
Five more in the cradle.
When an ogress breeds so, alas for the brood !
While I rock the cradle and sing a lullaby,
The cradle has gobbled the ogress !
Tell us, O Guhēśvara, what this may mean."

'Avidyā' is an ogress who has two babes, ego and jīva. The body is the cradle. As the five elements, the constituents of the body, are ultimately born of her, they too are her brood. She gobbles all the seven babes whom she herself gave birth to. Jīva is her eldest son. He carries, through ignorance, the cradle (body) and roams about and prattles many things. This, says Prabhu, is rocklng the cradle and singing lullabies. Knowing this, the jīva should dispel the error of infatuation, or he will suffer as he wallows therein.

When the seeker, dispelling this avidyā and shedding the infatuation, marches on the path of discipline, he will attain to the consubstantial union of aṅga and Liṅga. Prabhu has beautifully brought out the majesty of that Union in the next vacana :

"In a temple of wax
I saw a Liṅga of flame.
But there was none
To worship the Liṅga.
Whither is gone the Māyā
That had wrapped and seized
The systems of the path !
I saw the spark in the wood
Burn the wood itself.
There remained nothing
But Guhēśvaraliṅga."

The waxen temple is the gross body which has shed its inertia and become akin to the spirit. The Guhēśvara-like soul that dwells within is the Liṅga of flame. As soon as the seeker realises its nature, this wax-like body catches fire. Then there is neither temple, nor god, nor worshipper. The twain become one. When the jīva attains complete detachment, the Māyā that had seized it so far voluntarily vanishes. As the spark drawn out of the wood burns the wood itself, the spark of the effulgent Liṅga that has emerged out of the seeker through his own discipline, burning his corporal traits, transforms him into the Light, the Void itself.

Prabhu has composed a large number of such enigmatic vacanas. From the vacanas considered so far we might realise his superb genius even as shown in such cryptic vacanas. They seem to confound us, but when we, after straining ourselves a little, understand them, we are amply rewarded. Their content is worth our effort. Who would not wonder at a deer riding upon a tiger grazing the grass, the wisdom of a Guru teaching his disciple after saluting him in the Kaliyuga, the five corpses lying in a jungle in the heart of a village, or the three pictures drawn on the three walls? When we realise the significance of lines like

"No sooner he realises his caste is shed
Then his stigma is gone, O Guhēśvara."

"Should a waxen doll catch fire
Water itself would grow a thirst!"

"If a headless trunk will browse
On dry leaves,
Is it a wonder, O Guhēśvara,
If one loses sight of
The green leaves?"

"In a temple of wax
I saw a Linga of flame."

We are won by the wide experience that informs them. It may not be wrong if we say that, on account of such of Prabhu's enigmatic vacanas, the type itself has acquired a special worth.

However, it cannot be said that the enigmatic vacanas of all other vacanakāras, too, rise to this height. At times we notice that some of Prabhu's vacanas themselves are involved and contain inconsistent ideas. For instance, we may note:

"In heads five and twenty
Breasts seven, faces eight
And mouths fourteen are..."

the vacana that this discribes nature as wife and Liṅga as lord; or

"The cow celestial
Of the royal palace,
With an elephant's head,

Became a milch cow.
He who milks and drinks it has
No hands and feet,"

which speaks of a seeker who drinks through Guru's grace the milk of Felicity in the royal palace of Brahmarandhra in the head that is consciousness.

"The well that is as deep as man is born above the sky," or "A pint-size cow with a gallon-size udder"—we have to interpret these in a very involved and roundabout manner. Still their meaning is not quite clear. But such vacanas as Prabhu's, quoted above, revealing as they do with a slight hint the meaning of the entire vacana, can prove fine pieces of literature.

Such vacanas we occasionally found in other vacanakāras too. The enigmatic vacanas composed by Basavēśvara, Mahādēviyakka, Siddharāma, Cennabasava and others are comparatively small in number. A few of them we may consider here.

"Lord, that a baby born today
Should just today have grown to youth !
That baby now has taken its stand
Upon the street, soliciting !
But Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama alone can tell
How happy the experience of their love !"

When the seeker, on whom knowledge has dawned, offers himself as a disciple to Guru, he will be a new-born child today. The dawn of knowledge itself is a real birth. It is, so to say, a second birth. As soon as knowledge thus dawns, the love of God ripens to fullness. This is described by Basavanna as a child grown to youth on the very day it is born. The jīva, ripened through bhakti, treading the path of action, experiences the ineffable joy of the Divine, and, shedding its corporal traits, becomes the Divine incarnate. It is an experience that transcends thought and speech. Thus we witness in this brief vacana a happy synthesis of knowledge, action and bhakti.

"Bring with you the white grass,
The oleander leaf,
Sand from the river edge,

And come
Gather ye, children: let us do
Observance of the Gauri rite.
Let the little children gather:
So Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama,
The bountiful beyond compare,
May be my husband!"

The genuine inner bhakti is the white grass, the outer discipline the oleander leaf. Sand at the river's edge represents the Prāṇaliṅga, and the children, the kriyāśakti (power of action) and citśakti (power of will). With inner bhakti and outer discipline the two powers inherent in the seeker must worship the Guru and aspire to have Kūḍala Saṅga as Lord. Thus Basavanna has revealed the way of satipati bhakti, or bridal devotion to God.

In Mahādēviyakka's vacanas, too, we notice here and there a pretty overtone of a riddle:

"Setting a canopy of fire
Over an altar made of water,
Spreading a hailstone carpet,
He came and wed—
A headless bridegroom to a legless bride.
They gave me to a life
Never to be shaken off!
They married me to a groom
Named Cenna Mallikārjuna."

On the altar of mind, fickle as water, with a ceiling of the fire of knowledge, they lay a seat called vision. There the headless groom, or Prāṇaliṅga without worldly bonds, married the legless bride, or Śaraṇa without a worldly way of life. This is the eternal life, that knows no parting. Mahādēviyakka suggests that she has won such a union with Cennamallikārjuna. We may see in such vacanas to what heights bridal devotion can rise. In another vacana she speaks of the Consciousness that is wakened at the sight of the Guru:

"Hear me, my sister, sister, hear!
I dreamt a dream: wherein I saw

Areca, rice, a coconut ;
A beggar, with his pretty locks
And white teeth, come for alms.
And, as he passed by headlessly,
I followed him and caught his hand...
The moment that I saw
Cenna Mallikārjuna, I woke !"

Here 'I dreamt a dream' means 'I have realised Consciousness': rice and nuts represent Bhāvaliṅga and Prāṇaliṅga. She means thereby that she won Consciousness through meditation upon Prāṇaliṅga and Bhāvaliṅga. When Jaṅgama, the Śiva-incarnate, came to beg, i.e. to remove fear, she followed Him and got Liṅga in her palm. Thus she gained Cennamallikārjuna as her Guru and wisdom through His grace.

Let us now take up one of Cennabasavanna's vacanas :

"All that carried the corpse
And swooned to see it,
All that come to encircle it,
Lo, cannot touch it !
It already destroyed
The three that touched it :
Look how they died !
It neither burns in the forest
Nor in the fires bakes ;
But it died : the Consciousness,
Called Lord Kūḍala Cennasaṅgama !"

If Prabhu named the senses corpses in his vacana previously referred to, Cennabasavanna calls the very Iṣṭaliṅga, of the nature of Śiva, a dead corpse, as it is dead to the mundane objects of sense. It should be taken in the sense of the Spirit, or Consciousness. All who wear this Iṣṭaliṅga, being disgusted with worldly life, renounced it ; shedding the corporal traits, they became unconscious to the external world and opened their eye of consciousness. That the senses dare not touch such a Śaraṇa, is expressed in the lines :

"All that come to encircle it
Lo, cannot touch it !"

His body, mind and breath, touching the Iṣṭaliṅga, have themselves become Liṅga. Such a Śarana will not burn himself in the forest of worldly life again, nor bake in the fire of triple pain. Thus Cennabasavanna has shown the height of spiritual attainment that the seeker, through worship of Iṣṭaliṅga, would scale.

"By a throne of water
Is an eight-fold mountain;
On either side are
Two principal mountains.
The home of Brahma they
Know not, nor their own kind,
And are gone astray—
Masters of yōga all!
One who has reduced
The double six to unity
Is the perfect yogi,
O Kapilasiddha Mallinātha."

Here throne of water means the seat called body. Eight mountains represent the eight prides. The sense of 'I' and the sense of 'mine' are the two principal mountains. The Jīvas, swollen with eight prides, 'know not the home of Brahma', i.e. not knowing that they are themselves the Parabrahma, are ignorant. They fail to realise the process of consubstantial union of Liṅga and aṅga. As they do not know it, the eight-fold yoga leads them off the real path. The double six suggests, in Vīraśaiva terminology, the six aṅgas and six Liṅgas. These twelve, which the seeker should know, have emerged from the Parabrahman and come to his palm in the form of Iṣṭaliṅga. He who, through Iṣṭaliṅga, realises the basic oneness of the Parabrahman is a niṣkala, or perfect, yogi. Bearing the path of the Six-fold Hierarchy in mind, Siddharāma seems to have composed this vacana in accordance therewith.

Mōḷige Mārayya, Haḍapada Appaṇṇa and such others have written several vacanas of the enigmatic kind. In consequence, their number has grown very large. An anthology exclusively of enigmatic vacanas called 'Ellā Purātanara Beḍagina Vacana-

gaḷu",[1] or Enigmatic vacanas of all the Ancients, shows their number. A few of them may be noted here :

"A drug has caught a disease ;
A fount is parched with thirst ;
A fangless snake spits venom ;
A neem tree bears a mango—
Know him who climbed it
And ate it, O Bhimēśvaraliṅga,
The friend of the bodiless and
The holy forest-consumer."

In this vacana of Kolasantayya, we witness how the soul, bound in body, knowing its real nature, breaks its bonds and soars upward. The light of divine knowledge which is the real nature of the soul has caught the disease of bhāva, or worldly life. This is drug catching a disease as it were. The jīva caught by such a disease is overcome by the consuming thirst of greed. It is an unallayed thirst which is like a mountain being athirst. As the knowledge of Śiva dawns upon him when affected by the poison of the disease of worldly life, the cunning of the senses ceases and the nectar of Knowledge is produced. This is here expressed as venom of a fangless snake. The tree of the Śaraṇa's body, nourished by such a nectar, bears, through Guru's grace, Liṅga, the fruit of liberation. That itself is the mango fruit. The Śaraṇa who, knowing the secret of that Liṅga, unites with it, is one who has climbed the tree and eaten the fruit. Thus we notice here the strength of the seeker's spiritual discipline and the efficacy of Guru's grace.

Mōḷige Mārayya has also written several enigmatic vacanas. Some of them are quite elegant. Let us examine one of them here :

"I saw a fish
Born in the water of the dark ;
It has three fins, her young one six,
And it has swallowed its mother.

1. A palm leaf manuscript copy, which is in the Mysore Oriental Research Institute, collected and commented upon by Siṅgalada Siddhabasavaraja.

As the mother's womb was plucked out
And the tank's banks are broken,
O Mallikārjuna, the Unsullied,
It has no room in the womb
To live in."

Water of the dark represents the sensual pleasures, indicating ignorance. The jīva born therein is a fish. Jīva's three states of consciousness are the three fins. Mind is the young one of the fish. Mind runs after the six passions which are its six fins. When mind, shedding its craze for sensual pleasures, gains the light of knowledge, the jīva dispels his will's error. This is the young one swallowing the mother fish. When knowledge dawns thus, the seeker marches on the path of his discipline. Shedding, through the grace of Iṣṭa, Prāṇa and Bhāvaliṅga, the bodily sense, he becomes Liṅga incarnate. Then, the banks of the tank being broken, the water of saṁsāric ignorance is dried up. Now he cannot live in the tank. It means that the soul that has attained its ultimate height need not seek shelter in the body again. Thus this vacana draws the complete map of the soul, from its falling into the water of ignorance up to its swimming out of it.

The following vacana of Madhuvayya is also one of the enigmatic vacanas that occur in the anthology :

"If you would know
Arkēśvaraliṅga, make haste to observe
Those that, making a snake and a hawk
Eat together, and
Mixing neem with jaggery,
Drill in the sea."

Madhuvayya has suggested in this vacana that to merge two seemingly opposite forces in each other is the secret of the consubstantial union of Liṅga and aṅga. Here snake and hawk represent jīvātma and paramātma, or the soul and the Absolute. The Śaraṇa mingles both in the fire of knowledge. Thus, if the Śaraṇa consubstantially united the two in his Prāṇaliṅga, though through his senses he looks at the world, the Absolute

Itself appears to him with five faces. He gains an eye that finds jaggery in neem, the eternal power in the temporal world. The Śaraṇa, having realised such an eye, moves and has his being in the ocean of mundane life as though he does not; and, though in the body yet unaffected by its weal and woe, crosses it. This vacana thus attempts to reveal the secret of doing work with renunciation.

In another enigmatic vacana Bibbi Bācayya describes how he, annihilating all sense of jīvabhāva, has attained liberation:

"The moon having swallowed the sun,
A scorpion of clay bit an ingot of steel;
A snake, knowing the moon-holder
Somēśvaraliṅga, died of a frog's poison."

The Śaraṇa, serene as the moon, realises the Liṅga radiant as the sun. Thus the Śaraṇa who, by the contact of Liṅga, has now become the light, through his knowledge, or scorpion, dispels the cloud of ignorance, or steel ingot, and attains the peace that passeth understanding. As a consequence all doubts and differences associated with jīvabhāva disappear. This is what 'a snake died of a frog's poison,' means.

The next vacana to be considered is one of Arivina Maritande. He, too, like Bibbi Bācayya, with a series of absurdities cleverly grouped together, has revealed what he has to say:

"A snake of the earth
Kept company
With a frog in the heavens;
The snake having swallowed
The charm, and the frog the charmer,
The frog and the snake fall out:
The frog, spitting out the charmer,
Swallowed the snake;
The charmer, being infected
By the frog's poison, got intoxicated.
In making such distinctions
Knowledge itself is oneself,
Oneself, the Sadāśivamūrtiliṅga."

The mind that dwells in the body constituted of five elements is 'a snake of the earth.' The Māyā that lurks as ignorance in the soul's sky is 'a frog in the heavens'. Both Māyā and the mind are in the body in one and the same form. The mind swallows, through mere desire, the body of all that have empirical knowledge, and Māyā encompasses all who try to control mind. Thus when mind, the snake, swallows the charm, the frog of Māyā engulfs the wise man, the charmer, who tries to control the mind. So long as Māyā in the form of ignorance has an upper hand, this state of things goes on. But when right knowledge dawns, Māyā sheds its usual tricks and turns to involution and relieves the mind of its unwelcome traits. This is indicated by the enmity between the snake and the frog. Once Māyā turns to involution, it frees jīva, bound by doubts and derelictions, from the world's commerce. The Light of the involutionary Māyā illumines the mind. This is expressed in the words,

> "The frog, spitting out the charmer,
> Swallowed the snake."

And the words,

> "The charmer, being infected
> By the frog's poison, got intoxicated"

point to the ultimate height of the seeker. They also suggest that the nectar of divine light that wells out as a result of dispelling Māyā, transforms, through Guru's grace, the Śaraṇa's entire body into Iṣṭaliṅga. This vacana describes the guiles and tricks of Māyā and mind, as well as the light of right knowledge that conquers them.

Manumuni Gummaṭayya prays, in one of his enigmatic vacanas, for his release from Māyā's grip :

> "At the foot of the Himalayas
> And the centre of the earth
> An ogress was born.
> Three children before her,
> And five at her back,
> Who were born together with her.
> Father on her left,

And mother on her right,
Five brothers move about
In front of her and behind.
She, at one gulp,
Swallowed them all.
If you would touch her
With hands, nobody is there,
Nor mind can doubt her :
Nothing to kill
If you would kill her.
Fearful to my mind
If she is alive.
Pray, deliver me
From this fear, O Gummananātha
Agamyēśvara Liṅga,
O Lord of all I am."

In the Himalaya of 'I' and in the centre of the body constituted of the five elements is born an ogress called spiritual blindness. The three jīvas linked wlth Māyā are her three children ; the five are the elements born together with her. Śiva and Śakti are her parents, and the five senses her sisters. This Māyā, mixing with body and breath, punishes all senses. Being formless, she cannot be caught with hands. As she is of the nature of mind, no doubt appears. The Śaraṇa endowed with right knowledge need not, as he has banished her, fear saṁsāra. For him who is subject to her, Saṁsāra appears to be dreadful. To dispel her and free himself from her clutches should be the constant prayer of a seeker, says Gummaṭayya. We shall now examine Ādayya's vacana :

"I saw a snake
Swallowing a hawk
That was flying in the sky.
I saw it stand, after
Falling into fire.
I saw the head
Of the six-faced was torn
And vanished into nothing.

When fire was extinguished,
There was neither ashes nor charcoal.
Thy Śaraṇas alone know this,
O Saurāṣṭra Sōmēśvara!"

In the sky called ātman the snake of the mind has swallowed the hawk called Paramahaṁsa who is absorbed in self-ecstasy. When right knowledge dawns on the mind, its ordinary nature perishes in the light of jñānāgni, or fire of knowledge. Shedding the sense of jīva, it absorbs the divine consciousness of Liṅga throughout its body. Ādayya suggests this in the words, 'I saw it stand after falling into fire', and 'The head of the six-faced was torn and vanished into nothing'. Thus the light of knowledge of the Śaraṇa who has embodied Liṅga through and through, consummates in the Liṅga Supreme. The Śaraṇa's empirical knowledge having gone, both Liṅga and aṅga merge in the Absolute Void. Ādayya asserts that Śiva's experients alone know such consubstantial union. Thus the vacana describes the sublimity of that union.

We can in this way multiply any number of examples of such enigmatic vacanas, and this genre has grown so large that one is amazed at their mere number. The imaginative grandeur, the genius that mirrors in common words a supersensuous experience, or reveals a significant truth in words and emotions through newer and newer symbols and images which we often witness in some of these vacanas, blaze a new trail in the literature of that age. This has specially attracted the notice of the experimentalists in poetry today.

Many a time the same standard of poetic excellence may not be found in all vacanas. We witness in Prabhu's vacanas a massive play of imagination, a marvellous exposition of deep metaphysics through symbolic imagery, and the meaningful suggestiveness that he lends to words. Such vacanas are few in other vacanakāras. Some of Prabhu's, as we have already noticed, of this kind have attained the utmost perfection, and, revealing an unprecedented beauty, have become rare pieces of literature.

However, such enigmatic presentation, when carried to

excess, loses all grace and beauty and remains as a dry play of apradox. We have, leaving out such, so far noticed a few vacanas which possess richness and beauty of expression, imagination and emotional content. Through them the limits and limitations of this genre may be well realised.

EPILOGUE

We have discussed so far the different aspects of the Śaraṇas' mystic literature, taking their philosophy, discipline, trend of thought and mystic way as the basis of our inquiry. We have also noted, in a small measure, the beauties of their vacanas purely from the literary point of view. It is possible to discuss, from many other points of view, this mystic movement which involves various forces and individuals, means and attainments and a wide scope and extent of work. Taking a comprehensive survey of the Śaraṇas' total attainment and the mystic literature that it has shaped, we have studied so far the nature of the impact that this literature has made on the individual's life and, therethrough, on the life of the entire society. Let us now briefly sum up, from the same point of view, what is, on the whole, the contribution of the Śaraṇa literature to the philosophy of human life.

What the Śaraṇas realised is the complete idea of an integral life. They did not approve of a fragmentary way of looking at life or living it. External life varies from man to man, in his work and vocations, rank and position, ability and strength. This diversity itself is the secret of life. But to realise the nature of the unity that lies behind the diversity, to find the path that leads to life's fulfilment, to actually accomplish it and express it in their vacanas is an eminent contribution that the Śaraṇas have made to the world of thought.

The Śaraṇa movement was not confined to the intellectual or the literary sphere merely. It touched the very life-pulse of the people's strength and energy; enriched the mystic traditions of the land; directed the people's aims and aspirations towards the grand vision of a complete and integral life and, therethrough, accomplished the highest things that a spiritual movement might do.

If we exclude some of the unavoidable elements of the age, the ideal achieved by the Śaraṇas is for all time, and so compre-

hensive as to be welcome to all mankind. Man has grown more thoughtful than ever; more progressive and richer in experience. In consequence we are better fitted to understand the significance of the Śaraṇa's revolution, the nature of the religion they visualised and the boldness they exhibited in carrying out in action what they preached in words. All these may be more clearly perceptible to us now than ever.

The mystic trail blazed by them is in its own way unique. Their view of yogic synthesis, the incorporation of advaita, or difference and non-difference, the identification of Form and Formless, the undifferentiating equality between high and low, humanism that does not discriminate between man and woman—we have already noticed all these. They were not left as mere utopian ideals, but were practised with living faith and zeal in daily life, and uplifted the common people. The truth, contained in C. C. Josey's words, "What the study of religion should do for us, is to open our eyes to the spiritual values about us, and to provide us with an answer to problems regarding the meaning of life and of the universe",[1] found fulfilment in the Śaraṇa religion. It gave a new vision to find out the spiritual values in life. It provided an answer to the problems of the universe and of life in it. The seekers as well as the ordinary run of mankind of different temperaments and habits, instincts and abilities engaged in the daily routine of life, from the Śaraṇa path answers to the questions confronting them. For religion to have become, at once, a means of uplifting the people on such a large scale is, perhaps, it may be observed, the most wonderful event in the entire history of religion itself.

The reason for this is the special path that the Śaraṇas followed. They broke down all artificial barriers prevailing so far in religious matters and ways, and proclaimed by personal example that the realm of religion is open to all. The burden of being high-born, or pedantry in the Vēdas and scriptures, or the rich insolence of power and position is not welcome to the path of religion. The single qualification essential for the path of religion is the heart that yearns for liberation. Basavanna

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1. Josey, C. C., *Psychology of Religion.*

not only asked, "What matters if such a bhakta is high-born or low-born?" but actually hugged all the lowly, the downtrodden and the low-born to his heart in his warm embrace and made many of them into great bhaktas. He thus showed the way of redemption to the unfortunate and the miserable who were completely deprived of all paths to liberation.

In the history of religion, we notice, several attempts to uplift the people have been made. We witness how the heart of Jesus Christ melted at every step with compassion for the poor and the miserable, the common and the ordinary who found no ways of salvation. Consoling their grieving heart with the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven,"[1] "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted,"[2] furthered their souls' progress. He also adds, "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savour wherewith shall it be salted?".[3]

In the religious history of India, too, we come across such attempts at religious renascence. When the catholic and comprehensive outlook of the Upanishads disappeared, and religion, being narrowed, became the handmaid of time-servers for their selfish ends, Buddha had to come; the Ācāryas and the saints. How the whole endeavour of Buddha was so exclusively dedicated to the uplift of the common people needs no special mention here. Though the aim of the Ācāryas was also the redemption of the common man, yet their sphere of activity was limited to the intellectual realm. The nature of religion that they visualised was revealed through their commentaries on the Gita, the Brahmasūtra or the Upanishads. The outcome of their work did not come down sufficiently to the level of the common man as a living force.

This great work, we find, has been accomplished by saints. We have Ramananda, Kabir, Tulsidas, Chaitanya, Mira and such others in the North; in the South we find the Maharashtrian saints like Jñānadēva, Nāmadēva, Ēkanātha and Tukārām; the

1. The New Testament.
2. ibid.
3. ibid.

Śaiva saints ahd Āḷvars of Tamilnad; the Śaraṇas and the Dāsas, who followed them, of Karnatak. All these strove hard to carry the fruits of religion to the doors of the common man. The religious tradition of India acquired a wider sweep and many-sided strength through the spiritual pursuits of all these, and grew. In this rich national heritage the Śaraṇa mysticism and its expression, the Śaraṇa literature, occupy, with their gemlike lustre, a unique place.

The Śaraṇas used the language of the common man to give expression to their experiences. They who knew very well that, if religion is to serve as a means of the people's upliftment, it must express itself in the people's language, used Kannada, lending it the vigour required to communicate all thoughts and ideas, however difficult or deep, in a precise and direct manner, and made it a powerful medium. As a result of this, even the common people, regardless of their position in society, got equal opportunities to partake of the benefits of religion. Along with the language of the land, the life of the common people, too, became pure. Thus the Śaraṇas, giving expression to such noble experiences and setting an ideal of integral life before the people, strove hard to give a proper shape and direction to their life.

The Saranas' speciality lies in their adoption of a method calculated to foster an integral outlook which synthesizes all the faculties and talents lying dormant in man, so that they may grow to their fullness. Thereby they turned the very struggle of life into a theatre of spiritual exercise. They insisted that a man's vocation, undertaken as a means to his livelihood, must not become a hindrance to his religious life, and showed, by personal example, the secret of synthesizing the here and the hereafter.

"Listen, ye brothers, that board
The boat to ferry across
An overflowing river.
If the crocodile in the river
Swallows the boat, you have no help.
Row on, therefore, with care.

They died, who boarded it,
Although they rowed nor the boat sank.
None but he who knows this secret
Is the perfect Śaraṇa
In Guhēśvaraliṅga."

To die when the boat sinks is one way, whereas the other is to die without the boat sinking. The former points to the way of dying, through ignorance, in the sea of Saṁsāra, whereas the latter refers to the way of withdrawing from the world of ignorance and being born in that of knowledge. This is a second birth. The same is echoed in the words of William James: "The man must die to an unreal life before he can be born into the real life."[1]

Prabhu himself says elsewhere:

"In burying the shadow
Toils the whole world:
Will the shadow die
For these bodied beings?
If, noticing a thief
On the other shore of the sea,
You angrily abuse
Him from this shore,
Will he die?
They know not the secret
Of the stitch in the will;
Is there one who has loved
Our Guhēśvaraliṅga?"

To know the secret of the stitch in the will is the ultimate goal of all spiritual endeavour. This can be known by everybody, the Śaraṇa way has shown, irrespective of difference in sex, material position, sphere of life and Kāyaka. This is one of its outstanding achievements.

The word 'Kāyaka' and the extension of its connotation is a great contribution that the Śaraṇas made to the world of

1. *Varieties of Religious Experience.*

thought. The scientific world of today, which dreams the dream of an ideal society, self-sufficient enough to provide equal opportunities for all, must carefully study this precious view of the Śaraṇas. Every individual must follow one vocation or other as a means of his livelihood. No one has the right to eat without working. But that work or vocation must not be a self-maintenance merely. It must lead him at every step towards the goal of his life's self-fulfilment. And not merely of his individual life; it must make a constructive impact on the life of society as well. Any work, if done in this spirit, becomes worship. Thus the dignity of Kāyaka rests not on the nature of the work, but on the spirit in which it is done.

There is no such thing as high or low in occupations. Haraḷayya's occupation of making shoes is as important as that of Basavēśvara who governed a State as a minister. Basavēśvara demonstrated the truth of this by his own practice. Though a minister, he dedicated himself to the work of a drudge, saying:

"A broom in hand, a cloth-ring on my head,
I am a household drudge's son."

What work soever, when undertaken in a spirit of absolute surrender and in utter humility, becomes worship, without difference of high and low. This the Śaraṇas actually practised in their daily lives. As already seen, the Śaraṇas who followed hundreds of different occupations, sat in the Anubhava Maṇṭapa on a par with Basavanna. The ideal of 'dignity of labour', which is not realised even today, was actually lived by the Śaraṇas.

Such work, without being a mere means of one's maintenance, must render useful service to others. Only when it becomes a means of selfless service does it become a 'Kāyaka'. The definition of Kāyaka incorporates not only the secrets of Karmayōga but transcends it. It has grown so comprehensive as embody the secret of jñānayōga as well as bhaktiyōga.

The seeker may undertake any work of a non-violent and constructive character. He must do it in truth and purity, 'anchoring the sacred ash, the pure heart, in a dish of truth'.

He must build up such one-pointed faith in Kāyaka that he would, if he meets his Guru when engaged in it, ignore the latter. He must not take from its proceeds more than what is absolutely necessary. He must not save at all. He must know

"This greed is good for kings :
What has a Śiva devotee, my lord,
To do with such ?"

and do each day's Kāyaka on the very day and be pure. If he eats in his pride of 'I' it is a flaw. What is done in a spirit of such absolute surrender that the doer, the receiver and the deed are God Himself, is perfectly free from all attachment. Such freedom from the ego enables one to realise, through being engaged in Kāyaka, the truth that lies behind all this. Prabhu has elevated such Kāyaka to a spiritual height here :

"The deed you do must lead
To knowledge of some other thing.
Both faith and knowledge must be joined in one.
When faith has joined with knowledge, then
You must, by razing stark error out,
Attain the ultimate union in
Our Guhēśvaraliṅga, O Mārayya !"

The Śaraṇas have, in this sense alone, said "Kāyakavē kailāsa," or "work itself is worship".

We notice in such an extensive connotation of the word 'Kāyaka' the firm foundation essential for the building up of a self-sufficient society. The Śaraṇas' Kāyaka, dissolving the conflicts in society, showed how individual interest and social interest, abolishing their mutual conflict, should become complementary to each other.

An individual must not become a burden to society. To depend on another's work for one's maintenance, or to beg, does not become a man. Begging, as Buddhist monks do, from door to door was not the Śaraṇa ideal. The Kāyaka proclaimed the ideal that every individual must work according to his capacity, and that this work must serve not only his own redemption but that of society also, so that spiritual power

should emerge from the wordly life itself. This is the highest message that any spiritual ideal can give. It is a unique accomplishment of the Śaraṇas that they embodied this ideal as the breath of their being and the indispensable religion of their life.

We have already referred, in the chapter 'The Śaraṇas' Trend of Thought', to their independent thinking and their contribution to the world of thought. Theirs was the rational approach of testing all problems confronting them in the crucible of their experience and of retaining the grain after discarding the chaff. They never believed anything to be a truth simply because it was recorded in an ancient work. The most exact test of truth is the light it sheds on daily life. It was a new and scientific way of looking at religion and at all things associated with it. As man's experience grows, as the scope of his life widens and life's circumstances change, religion, too, must adapt itself to the new and changed conditions. Then and then only can it serve as a living force in life. Josey's words are very important in this context:

"Religious leaders should make every effort to have religion keep step with advances in scientific and moral understanding."[1]

It is really wonderful that the Śaraṇas, developing, in those early days, an outlook advocated by psychologists today, could analyse the form and content of religion. That is why we occasionally come across in their vacanas severe criticism of blind beliefs and, at times, even sarcastic jibes and jeers. But the attitude of mind that lies behind those remarks is not derision of any religion. It is only an act of honouring a universal religion that could stand the test of time. This new outlook, to be necessarily followed in all evaluations of religion, is a contribution that is ever new and that the Śaraṇas gave to the world of religion.

With this new outlook the Śaraṇas tested everything. Bringing about a revolution in the world of thought existing till then, they elevated it to a certain height. Even as they

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1. Josey, C. C., *Psychology of Religion.*

united the temporal and the spiritual in the term Kāyaka, they brought about a peculiar synthesis in the realm of yogic pursuits. We have already seen how the concept of their Śivayoga not only includes all the other yogas like jñāna, bhakti, karma, raja, haṭha and mantra, but also goes a step further. The Six-fold Hierarchy, which served as a background to the Śivayoga, in the Saranas' contemplative life evolved and became a comprehensive power. If the System of Sixfold Hierarchy is the contribution that Veeraśaivism has made to the world of philosophy, assimilating it in their daily life, to have invested it with a unique power and spirit, it may be said, is the contribution that the Śaraṇas have made to the world of religion.

To have accomplished a synthesis of knowledge and action is an important element of the Śaraṇas' spiritual discipline. Knowledge attains its fulfilment only when it is carried into action. Knowledge without action is, 'like a packet of food tied upon the belly', futile. Food tied upon the belly cannot appease hunger, even so knowledge without action cannot lend strength to the seeker—the Śaraṇas declared. They, practising what they preached and transcending the baser and parochial interests of society, rose to a Himalayan height of nobility and idealism.

They incorporated all this approach of theirs in the term "anubhāva", or mysticism. Even like the term Kāyaka, this too is a great contribution that the Śaraṇas have made to the world of the Spirit. Such terms as vibhāva (impression) and anubhāva (oppression), we notice, are used in poetics in a different sense. But the Śaraṇas used it in the sense of Mysticism and enriched it by investing it with the wealth of an added connotation. We have already discussed the terms anubhāva and mysticism, their scope and range, ways and directions, in an earlier chapter. In brief, the Śaraṇas' term anubhāva embodies the perfect fruit of the synthetic vision that is realised in the path of spiritual evolution. It symbolises a vision of integral life.

The Śaraṇas gave form to that vision in literary language. The creation of literature itself was not their main aim. Their main object was to forge, through their spiritual discipline, a

religion of synthesis that would serve as the basis for the people's upliftment. They gave expression to the rush of feelings and emotions that they experienced in their hearts during their march along that path. In spite of themselves it became literature. The language which carried their experience acquired strength and prestige.

When we study the form and content of the Kannada language and literature that developed before and up to the Age of the Śaraṇas, their contribution to Kannada will be quite evident. The content of language, the basic objects of literature, the method of treatment, form and content—in all these respects Kannada got a new birth. The language, which so far had been the pedant's pleasure and a means to rhetoric used in the royal court, now shed its pedantic garb, became simple and graceful. It proved to be a sacred means of purifying and regenerating life. It became itself a light unto everything else that it touched. Let alone the leading lights like Basavanna, Prabhu, Akkamahādēvi and such others, several Śaraṇas and women saints, who were engaged in their humble vocations and never knew what learning or scholarship was, were able to write vacanas that could rise to the height of elegant literature.

Whenever we think of the Śaraṇa literature, it is but natural that we should also be reminded of the Dāsa literature. It swelled on a large scale, mainly in the 15th century, through the creation of Purandaradasa and such others and shed a like influence on the contemporary society. Along with literature, it made use of musical talents, too. But when students of literature make a comparative study, from the point of view of literature pure and simple, they will realise the intrinsic greatness of the vacana literature. The Dāsa literature has also contributed with its own special features, it is true, to the many-sided growth and development of the Kannada language and literature. From that point of view it is also equally important. Notwithstanding, the many-sided experience of the world, and life's trials and joys, successes and failures, aims and aspirations, the heart's anguish, spiritual discipline and its progress and its different stages, and the height that humanism can rise to—all these are not so abundantly revealed in Dāsa Kīrtanas as in the Śaraṇas'

vacanas. From this point of view a comparative study of the two is highly essential. As and when such a study is undertaken, the nature of the Śaraṇas' contribution to Kannada literature, and therethrough to the world literature, shall be better known and made more and more evident.

The Śaraṇas' words have many a time tried to capture the infinity beyond the bounds of time, place and expression in the language of the finite. If an attempt to hold in mortal words an immortal experience that transcends our ordinary empirical consciousness were to become poetry, the Śaraṇa literature is profitably enriched by such poetic elements. We had better remember here Prabhu's words that tell us of the ultimate height of consubstantial union of Aṅga and Liṅga, or words that bear the exuberance of Basavanna's bhakti or the delicious vacana, that mirror the bridal piety of Mahādēviyakka.

In short, the Śaraṇas' mystic literature has seen all aspects of life with an integral eye. Even as it has provided full scope for the complete unfolding of all the powers latent in an individual, it has also paid adequate attention to the interest of the entire society constituted by individuals. Such a synthetic way of looking to the combined interest of the society as well as of its constituent members is manifest in Śaraṇa literature. This is an eternal truth that must guide our lives. Human life is extending its horizon with newer and fresher experiences day by day. As it gains new experiences, it has to face new problems, too. The mind of the modern man, being prompted by all these, is seeking to find out an abiding truth amidst the flux and change. This is the problem that ever confronts man. Though human life has greatly changed in outward appearance, yet this problem ever remains as a formidable challenge to human genius and enterprise. But the Śaraṇas have offered a solution of lasting interest to it. No wonder that their words remain to this day as enduring truths welcome to all, irrespective of creed and clime. They shine as powerful beacons, to guide man in his quest after ultimate perfection and cast their brightest rays on those who come nearest them.

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